

PLAIN SENSE.

A NOVEL.

“ Reason still use, to reason still attend.” POPE.

Second Edition,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM LANE,
AT THE
Minerva-press,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

M.DCC.XCVI.



PLAIN-SENSE.

CHAP. I.

—“Celestial wisdom calms the mind,
“And makes the happiness she does not find.”

JOHNSON.

BUT the mind where reason is habitually paramount, gives place but for a moment to the anarchy of the passions.

Ellen roused herself from the temporary stupefaction that had seized her, and, rising, returned with all the haste in her power to the house.

Her absence had already given occasion for surprise and inquiry; and Mary

had suggested as its probable cause, a farewell visit to old Deborah.

It had however been protracted until it had produced a considerable degree of anxiety in the breasts of those who thought every moment of her absence an hour.

Mary and Sir William were about to have come in search of her, when from the windows of the room where they were they saw her approach. They ran towards her, and Mary, in accents of solicitude and Sir William in those of reproach, eagerly inquired where she had been.

“With Deborah,” said Ellen, and instantly the tone of her voice betrayed the emotion which still agitated her, and which the discomposure of her countenance, and the trembling of her limbs made still more evident.



“Why,

“Why, why would you go there?” said Mary, “that poor creature’s gratitude was sure to be too much for you: how much better had it been that you had been playing and singing with us.”

“I will play and sing with you now,” said Ellen, and in a hurried and fluttered manner hastily sat down to the harpsichord; she touched the keys, but it was discord, not harmony, that she produced. Every eye was fixed upon her. Her father drew near with the extremest anxiety, and Sir William, who had kept close to her from the moment he had met her, said, with a tone of chagrin and reproach, “this visit to an old woman has strangely discomposed you.”

“I am indeed extremely discomposed,” returned she, and rising, “my father, let me speak to you.”

Mr. Mordaunt, struck with a deadly fear, though he knew not of what, put his

arm round her waist, she had need of the support, and withdrew with her into another room.

There a seasonable burst of tears relieved the almost bursting heart of Ellen : But recovered from this agitation, she sought to quiet, by a recital of every circumstance, the agonizing alarm that she perceived had seized her father. The narrative, however far from alleviating, increased every apprehension he had before felt : In it he thought he saw the wreck of Ellen's happiness, and in her happiness that of her reputation. He thought he saw the intended marriage with Sir William broken, and broken from a revived passion for another man ; a passion which ought to have been extinguished before such a marriage had been thought of. But he knew not Ellen ; he knew not, that the severest sufferings for another, fearless for herself, could not turn her aside from the path of rectitude and reason. He saw her agitated, alarmed,

alarmed, and unhappy, and he distinguished not the source from whence those feelings arose. He could not hope that it was alone pity and fear for Henry that excited them. He remained silent and thunder-struck, unknowing what to suggest, or what to advise.

"Let me entreat you," said Ellen, to go to Mr. Thornton, let him seek out the wretched Henry, let him, if possible, soothe his desperation, and lead him to patience."

"And Sir William?—What shall be said to Sir William?"

"I will tell him myself every thing."

"Tell him! What will you tell him?"

"All that has passed. I am sure he will join in my commiseration for the unhappy Henry."

Mr. Mordaunt felt his fears subside, and his hopes revive. "So untoward a circumstance,"

cumstance," said he hesitating, "may perhaps excite in Sir William's mind—"

"Nothing but compassion surely; How otherways can it affect Sir William? have I ever disavowed my affection to Henry? Have I ever pretended that I renounced him from any consideration but that of duty? The circumstance of to-night has not altered the grounds of that renunciation; it has not shaken the esteem, the love I have for Sir William: They were not founded upon the absence of Henry, but upon the good qualities and kind affections of Sir William. My designs and my sentiments are unaltered. I will indeed confess my happiness is considerably lessened. I had been taught to believe that Henry too had sacrificed his first love at the shrine of filial duty: This belief did not form a motive for my own conduct, but it contributed largely to the happiness I hoped to draw from it. I cannot be happy while Henry is so perfectly wretched,

wretched, and made so by me. But had I known the true state of his mind some months ago, should I not still have acted as I have done? I was not to hold myself accountable to him; and now I do know it, can it, ought it to have any influence on my actions?"

"My dearest Ellen, you are every thing that a father can wish, you are every thing you ought to be."

"Go, dear Sir, go, and send Mr. Thornton in pursuit of our poor wanderer, and beg Sir William will come to me."

The agony of suspense and fear that Sir William had undergone during this conversation, no words can describe; nor had the feelings of the rest of the party been much less acute. On the return of Mr. Mordaunt they all crowded round him.

"Don't be alarmed, there is no harm. —Ellen has seen Henry. But go, my dear Sir William, go, and hear from herself all that has passed; there is nothing to be regretted in the affair but the misery of poor Henry."

"Seen Henry!" repeated every voice, when Mr. Mordaunt pronounced these words.

"Nothing to be regretted but the misery of poor Henry!" said Sir William, and rushed eagerly to the room into which Ellen had retired.

She met him with her hand held out to him, "Come, my best friend, come, and with your kindness sooth the agitation, that compassion for the unhappy Henry has excited."

"Unhappy Henry!—Can he be called unhappy, Ellen, whose sufferings make
your

your eyes overflow? and for whose loss the bitterness of your regrets robs even your bridal hour of happiness?"

"Away with such a thought," said the upright Ellen, "if my heart did not sink within me, if my whole frame were not discomposed by having been witness of his distress, I should be unworthy of your esteem or my own.—Henry was my first, and had not insuperable obstacles interposed, would have been my only choice; but when I bowed before those obstacles, it was in a full and perfect sense, without any mental reservation, without any lurking hope whatever, that I said I renounced him. With equal sincerity, with equal singleness of heart, I have avowed, that your merits and your affections have made such an impression on my mind, that in consenting to pass the whole of my life with you, I believe I have secured a pure and rational felicity for the remainder of my days. The circumstance of this night,

though it has clouded the serenity of my mind, has made no alteration in its sentiments ; and I shall to-morrow become your wife with the same desires, with the same satisfaction, the same affections, and the same hopes, that I should have given you my hand yesterday."

" In such an assurance you seem to give me all I can ask ; yet, how far short is such a modified regard, of the ardent and exclusive love I bear you."

" Be assured," cried Ellen fervently, " that no love can be more exclusive than mine, if you mean to confine the sense of that word to the love that a wife ought to bear her husband ; if indeed you extend it to all the sollicitudes of friendship, or family affection, know, that I never felt such a love—I am incapable of feeling such a love, and if I were conscious of any tendencies towards it, I should think I ought to express

press them—I can feel a preferable love, I cannot feel an exclusive one.”

“ You never felt such a love?”

“ No.—And the engagements that now subsist between us is a proof of it. Had not a parent, had not my friends, had not my duties, had each their share in my heart, would those ties ever have been broken, upon the dissolution of which, those that now subsist between you and me have been founded.”

“ Oh, may I be able,” cried Sir William, tenderly embracing her, “ to connect an ardent if not an exclusive love for me, with all the energies of such a character, then shall I be the most blest of men.”

“ Doubt not but you will do so—did I believe otherways, no consideration whatever would induce me to become your wife.”

Sir William had then patience to listen to the circumstances of Henry's sudden appearance and as sudden departure. He listened, but certainly with no compassion corresponding to that felt by the relator; for, as he had a deeply-rooted fear of Henry's influence over the mind of Ellen, so he was not without a feeling towards him something resembling hatred.

Ellen, though she told all the truth, avoided from a sentiment of delicacy, to press upon Sir William's observation the extent of Henry's wretchedness, and the sense she had of it; and Sir William, though he shrunk from every particular that represented Ellen as tenderly touched for Henry, shewed an eager curiosity after the most minute circumstance that had passed, he sought to draw something like censure of the vehemence Henry had discovered from the lips of Ellen: But this he sought for in vain; the accents of the purest sincerity were ever on those lips, nor did any
imagined

imagined refinement of feeling ever betray her into the wanderings of duplicity, and she felt only the most lively and tender compassion for the sorrows of Henry: She knew she had herself been deceived as to the state of his mind, and had no doubt but that equal deceit had been practised towards him, though the nature of the falsehood was probably different: She could impute his indiscreet appearance, his vehemence, and his distraction, only to his having been kept designedly in ignorance of the real situation in which she had been for some time past, and from its having at length reached him in its full extent, and in so sudden a manner, as to suspend for a time all the restraint of reason and of prudence: All blame, therefore, was far from her mind, and never was anxiety more painful than that she felt on his account.

Mr. Thornton at length returned: He informed her that he had traced Henry back to his chaise, which, (his servants not
having

having received any orders from him) had waited at the parsonage, from the moment he quitted it until he returned, that having put himself into it he had driven back to the next Inn, where changing horses, he had again pursued his journey evidently with a design to escape as soon as he could from a place which overwhelmed him with recollections he was unable to bear.

Ellen could not hope to hear any thing more consolatory; yet the idea of Henry a fugitive, under the guidance only of his ungoverned passions, flying from her, and suffering for her, fixed a pain in her heart, that no considerations on the rectitude of her own conduct, or the probable prospect of happiness before her could remove: Her best balm would have been a frank and tender participation in her sorrows by Sir William. It would have been, on his part, the surest means of avoiding the evil he dreaded; but she beheld him with regret and apprehension, gloomy and silent: His attentions towards her wore rather the
air

air of suspicion than of tenderness, and seemed to suggest to her the propriety of concealing feelings, which she could not but consider, not only as unavoidable, but laudable.

The evening wore away with little satisfaction on any side, and Ellen retired to her apartment with a fear for the peace of her future life; which not the sudden appearance of Henry, not those recollections that it had awakened in her, but the dispositions which it seemed to have betrayed in Sir William had impressed on her mind.

When Ellen appeared at breakfast the next morning, her countenance wore an air of thoughtfulness, which no one in her present circumstances could reprove, but she had endeavoured, as much as possible, to banish all sadness from it. The gay affection that sparkled in Sir William's eyes, and the ardent love with which they were darted towards her, did more in one instant towards

towards producing this effect, than all her reflections and resolutions, formed through a sleepless night, had been able to accomplish.

“Forgive, my dearest love, forgive,” said Sir William, “all that last night might look like distrust, or discontent, on my part. My feelings might perhaps condemn, but my judgment wholly acquitted you; and who will wonder that knows the real value of my Ellen’s heart, that a fear, however unjustly founded, that is was not wholly mine, should overwhelm me with sadness?”

“My dear Sir William, only do yourself justice, and you will never have any fear concerning my heart that can give you a moment’s uneasiness.”

Sir William delighted, embraced her, and Ellen’s almost lost hope, that the road which her reason had pointed out to her, as sure to lead happiness, began to revive.

The

The marriage ceremony was performed by Mr. Thornton: Mrs. Thornton and her daughter attended their beloved Ellen to church, and there they parted. The pain of this parting scene was mitigated on all sides by a firm promise on the part of the Thorntons, that many months should not elapse before they visited Berkshire.

Charlotte accompanied her sister, and Mr. and Mrs. Mordaunt and their eldest daughter were to join them at Oakley in about a month.

CHAP. II.

"Patience sovereign o'er transmitted ill."

JOHNSON.

TO Oakley Ellen began her journey, but in the situation of this country residence of Sir William's, there was one circumstance, that since the adventure of the preceding day, Ellen had adverted to with pain.

Oakley was situated scarcely half a mile distant from the small house belonging to Lord Villars, to which he had retired on the death of his son. It was not the usual residence of the family, but she knew it was a favo-

a favorite spot with Henry, and a place to which he frequently resorted, to pursue the sports of the field ; she could not hope that he would soon be able to see her with the composure, without which he ought not to see her at all ; and she felt hurt at being the cause of banishing him from a place, where, in the present state of his mind, he might probably have found the most eligible ; from the distraction and regrets that preyed upon his heart. She feared his resource might be again to quit England, and in this continued estrangement from his country and family, she foresaw a probable change in his character, and manner of thinking, extremely to the disadvantage of his happiness and principles ; she knew him formed to be an useful and active member of society, capable of fulfilling, with honor to himself and advantage to others, any civil or political duty which his rank in life, or the circumstances of his country might call him to. To have him waste his existence in wandering from one foreign court

court to another, distant from every domestic and every national connexion, a prey to useless repining, or the victim of frivolous pleasures, was an idea that filled her mind with the most painful disquietude, a disquietude that arose almost beyond endurance, when she ventured to ask herself the question, "What has driven him to this?"

Sir William observed, with chagrin, her anxiety, and the solicitude with which she desired to hear something of Henry; but in every other particular he had reason to think himself the most fortunate of men.

The charms of Ellen's person and conversation, the sweetness of her temper, and the unfeigned affection that her every action manifested towards him, left him nothing to wish, had he known how to have regulated his wishes by the rule of reason.

But, in fact, Sir William was neither reasonable nor amiable. Under all the exterior

rior graces that a pleasing person, polished manners, and a good and cultivated understanding could bestow, he was vehement in his temper, and, when thoroughly provoked, implacable. Lavish in pursuit of his own gratifications, niggardly in promoting those of others; he loved Ellen with all the ardency of passion, but he loved her as a possession, in which he could not bear that any other should have a share. The mildness of her manners and the reasonableness of her conduct, with the complacent state of mind that belongs to a successful lover, had preserved him during his residence in Northumberland from every possibility of betraying his natural disposition, and without designing to practise any deception, Sir William Ackland, in the first months of Ellen's knowledge of him, and Sir William Ackland during the rest of his life, were two men, of distinct and separate characters.

It was, however, only slowly, and by degrees, that the true and unamiable character was

was disclosed to the unwilling observation of Ellen, and it was not until every doubt was done away, in the most calamitous certainty, that Ellen would allow herself to believe that the man who could appear reasonable, obliging, kind and generous, was, in truth, unperfuadeable, harsh, violent, and selfish. But the discovery was not yet made—the present hour was all harmony, and the brightest prospects opened before her.

She was joined by the family, from Groby Manor, at the time appointed, and she learnt with a satisfaction that banished all sadness from her mind, that Henry had signified his design to his father of taking up his abode in England; he was at present engaged in making an excursion to the North of Scotland, but he had promised to join his father at the Park at Christmas.

In truth, however vehement and restless Henry might have been, while his mind was divided between hope and fear, and while
inaction

Inaction on his part might be necessary to the loss of his happiness, he had no sooner recovered from the paroxysm of grief and despair, into which the consummation of his misfortune had thrown him, than he roused all the faculties of his mind to bear with the constancy and dignity of a rational creature, griefs that no impatience or extravagance could in any way lessen.

Of Ellen's person and Ellen's character he was enamoured. He looked around, and in his idea saw nothing equal to her on earth; and he felt that however impelled by passion, or misled by fancy, he might in any future hour be tempted to form a temporary engagement with another woman, that there was no other whom the sanction of his judgment could allow as worthy to succeed Ellen in his affections as a wife; least of all could the frivolous, the inconsequent Lady Almeria be worthy; he considered her too as the efficient cause that had separated him from Ellen, and if to
other

other women he were indifferent, to Lady Almeria he was abhorrent.

But in resolving that no consideration should ever compel him to accept of her as a wife, he wished to soften the obduracy of his opposition to his father's will as much as possible. It was in this light that he turned with disapprobation from the idea that had once appeared seducing to him, of living like a vagabond upon earth, wandering from place to place and finding no where a home.

"I have a home, I have a family, I have a country," said he, "dearest Ellen, with what delight, animated by your approbation, should I have endeavoured to have fulfilled my duties to them all. Your love must no longer be my reward. But your virtue shall be my stimulator, your eye shall follow me through life, and it shall not weep for the degeneracy of your cousin.

Three

Three days after the marriage of Ellen Henry was sufficiently master of himself to form this resolution, and to write the following letter in consequence of it to his father."

"I'll would it become me, my Lord, to reproach you for the desolation you have brought upon me, I wish my wrongs to be as silent, as they are now hopeless of redress; I would willingly impute some part of them to mistake, and that the fatal consequences of such mistakes may spread no farther, it behoves me, my Lord, to speak with the most unequivocal frankness as to my present sentiments, and my future designs—let me entreat your pardon while I do so.

"The duty I would wish to offer to your Lordship is unlimited obedience; but the circumstances in which I am placed render such a duty impossible: That image which the hand of virtue herself impressed upon my heart; that affection that was once
VOL. II. C honoured

honored by your Lordship's sanction, must and will remain the cherished inmate of my breast, until the warm current of life ceases to flow, and the power of memory is suspended.

“ I will be now no husband, my Lord : But, with this exception, I will endeavour to be every thing that your Lordship can desire. If I am taught to hope, that upon this condition I may be allowed to resume my place in your family, and to participate in the blessings of domestic society, I will rather endeavour to find a balm for my griefs in the scrupulous discharge of my duty to my relations and country, than seek an asylum in some foreign land, where buried from all observation, I once intended, I and my sorrows should be mentioned no more. But if—O pardon me, my Lord, that I am obliged to be thus peremptory, if still the persecution, which in its progress has involved me in so much distress, is to be carried on, then, my Lord,

Lord, shall I be compelled to bid adieu to my native soil for ever.

“My resolutions are not to be shaken, nor will I, by allowing of the apparent possibility of my wavering, be accessory to any prolongation of hope in the breast of your Lordship, or of any other interested in my decision, that must end in disappointment.

“I entreat your Lordship, that these my unalterable resolves may be made known in the most explicit manner to any whom you may imagine they may concern. I would willingly in my own person be saved a harshness towards those who may conceive they have a title to even something more than gratitude from me, but if your Lordship is averse from saving me this unpleasantness, I shall be constrained rather to incur the charge of insensibility, than that of deceit.

"I shall continue at this place until I am favoured with your Lordship's answer, and whatever it may be, I shall endeavour to bend my mind to it, with all the submission that becomes,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's,

Most dutiful and ever devoted,

HENRY VILLARS.

Lord Villars had been apprised of Henry's interview with Ellen, and the desperation that he had manifested; and his mind had been filled with the most lively apprehensions in consequence. There was no extremity that he had not feared Henry might

might be driven to, and therefore the contents of this letter relieved him from a state of most painful anxiety.

At the instant it was written he could expect nothing less than a formal renunciation of the whole sex for Ellen's sake, but Lord Villars little feared that a man of Henry's years, and Henry's disposition, would turn hermit. His desire of being upon amicable terms with his father, and his purpose of continuing in England persuaded Lord Villars that time might yet produce all the effects he wished.

He readily promised that neither Lady Almeria or any other woman should be offered to his acceptance, and manifested the most parental concern for his present sufferings. "Sufferings, he said, which made his own heart bleed, and which nothing but the most cruel necessity could ever have induced him to have inflicted on a son, whom he loved as he did his own soul."

Promises and professions cost Lord Villars nothing, they were equally for the present moment without reference for the past, or thought of the future. He knew, indeed, how, by the colouring he could give to any after events, to "keep his promise to the ear and break it to the sense." He desired Henry to come directly to the Park, where, whatever Lord Villars did, Lady Villars longed to see him. Henry had accordingly made them a visit of a few days, but at the expiration of that time had gone upon a tour into the Highlands, hoping by the means of a variety of objects, and constant change of place, a little to blunt the edge of those remembrances, which, while they preserved their present acuteness, were, at moments, more than his reason and his fortitude could support.

CHAP. III.

“I knew a wench married in an afternoon, as she
“went to the garden for parsley, to stuff a rabbit,
“and so may you.”

SHAKESPEARE.

LORD VILLARS and his family had been among some of Ellen's first visitors: From the offensive flattery and studied fondness of Lord Villars, she could not but turn with undisguised aversion, but in the friendship and partiality of Lady Villars she experienced a very sincere pleasure.

Lady Villars had no very clear idea of the whole merit of Ellen's conduct, but she thought herself under important obligations to her for the readiness with which she had

quitted her rights to a connexion with her son, a connexion, which Lady Villars honestly believed would have been attended with the most fatal consequences to her whole family.

Lady Villars therefore rejoiced in Ellen's present situation, as in what she thought a due reward for the generous self denial she had practised in her conduct towards Henry. But when she saw with what propriety Ellen supported the rank of life in which she was placed, how she adorned and animated society, and how she conciliated the affections of all who approached her, she could hardly repress a regret that any consideration, however powerful, should have stood in her way, to the securing to herself such a daughter, and her son such a wife.

With Lord and Lady Villars came Lady Almeria: From Lady Villars, whose integrity forbade her concurring in any deception, she had learnt the contents of Henry's letter,

letter, she therefore knew that her brows were bound with willow, but her heart seemed not the less light for this; she rattled, laughed, danced, rode and walked with the gayest and happiest of her companions, made a jest of Henry's cruelty, and rallied Ellen on her charms, which lost no part of their ascendancy even over a hapless lover. Ellen's gravity upon such occasions would have taught any one but the insensible Lady Almeria reserve upon this subject; but Lady Almeria had a love of mischief in her disposition, which no consideration for another was sufficient to check her in the gratification of, and though she had no pleasure in tormenting Ellen, she thought it good sport to make Sir William jealous.

To a wild girl of little more than seventeen Sir William at past forty seemed a Methusalem, and she thought it comical to make the old gentleman (as she called him) knit his brow and pout, by talking of the love and the merit of his young rival.

Lady Villars would have repressed this impertinence, but Lady Almeria was incorrigible, for joined to no common degree of inconsideration, she was sensible of the importance she was of to the family, and was not unconscious that in spite of the present coldness of Henry, Lord Villars had not resigned his hopes of making her one day his daughter-in-law.

She therefore often treated both Lord and Lady Villars with a kind of civil insolence, and very openly asserted her right of having her own way in every thing: She did not want talents, or discernment, and she despised Lady Villars as much for the narrowness of her understanding as she did Lord Villars for the sordidness of his views.

Lord Villars tolerated all this in consideration of the number of her estates, but Lady Villars soon conceived a decided dislike to her, and a deep rooted fear of her ever becoming the wife of her son; this
dislike

dislike and this fear were rendered more lively by the comparison she daily made between her character and that of Ellen.

But Lord Villars' hopes and Lady Villars' fears were alike unfounded, and were one proof more, added to the thousands that occur every day, that if the sufferings of life were to be confined to actual misfortunes, the mountain of human woes which now seems so immense, and extended, would shrink into a mole-hill, of a size so small as almost to escape observation. It is, however, inseparable from our nature, that our sufferings shall be more from what we fear, than from what we feel, and in reckoning the sorrows attached to our existence here, we are to estimate not what is but what it is apprehended may be.

Amongst the joyous circle that Ellen on her marriage had drawn round her at Oakley, her brother was not forgotten.

He had continued under the private tuition where Mr. Mordaunt had placed him on his return from Jamaica, until of a sufficient age to be sent to college, and at eighteen he had been removed to Oxford.

Mr. Mordaunt dreading the influence of his wife on the character of his son, had suffered him to spend as little time as possible at Groby Manor, while he continued a school boy, and after his removal to Oxford had continued so to fill up his vacations with some pleasurable scheme or other, as almost totally to banish him from thence, without any appearance of design or unkindness. But he was now grown to manhood, and precautions of this kind were no longer possible or necessary; nor could Mr. Mordaunt any longer refuse himself the satisfaction of associating with his son, especially as he flattered himself, that his own opinions might probably now have more influence over him than those of his mother.

William

William Mordaunt had now therefore joined the family party at Oakley; he was handsome, gay, and good-humoured, but he was wild, inconsiderate, and ungovernable.

Lady Almeria and he were drawn towards each other, by a sympathy of character and disposition. From the first hour of their acquaintance they became inseparable, and Lord Villars saw that if he did not find some immediate remedy for this impending evil, Lady Almeria's fortune would be lost to his family for ever.

He had recourse to his usual means, delay.

He laid before Lady Almeria the inequality and degradation of the connexion that she seemed disposed to form, and declared, that while she was under his direction, neither his honor nor his conscience would permit him to suffer it.

Lady

Lady Almeria listened in silence and with an insolent non-chalance to his lecture, and when he had ended it, twisting her sash ribbon round her arm as she went out of the room, replied between her teeth, "We must wait until I am one-and-twenty then."

If Lady Almeria would but wait, it was all Lord Villars could dare to hope from her, and from his own machinations during this period of expectation, he was to look for what further was wanting to his success. From his usual coadjutrice Mrs. Mordaunt, he could not in this case expect any assistance, for however desirous she might be to promote the interests of her nephew in general, when they came in competition with those of her son, they could not be expected to have any but a second place. She had seen the growing fondness between him and Lady Almeria, and had secretly resolved to do all in her power to forward it. It had been observed by Mr. Mordaunt with very different wishes and views, but he
wisely

wisely thought a seeming inattention to what was going on the most likely method of preventing a fancy from growing into a prejudice, and he imagined if his son were not led by opposition into making engagements with himself, not to give up Lady Almeria, that the present partiality would probably end in a boy and girl's short-lived flirtation, without any farther consequence.

But the precipitancy of Lady Almeria's passions rendered the plans of hinderance on the part of Lord Villars and Mr. Mordaunt, and those of assistance on the part of Mrs. Mordaunt, equally vain and useless.

Lady Almeria had listened to Lord Villars with the most apparent indifference, but this did not arise from her being careless as to his opposition to her designs, but from her resolution that all opposition, from whatever quarter, should prove vain.

She

She went directly from Lord Villars to William Mordaunt, she found him practising archery with some of his companions.

“Come along with me,” said she, “I have something to say to you; Guardy, (for so she was accustomed in contempt to call Lord Villars) “Guardy,” said she, when they were alone, “has been fulminating his interdict against my becoming your wife. Neither his honor or his conscience, forsooth, can allow of so unequal a connexion. That is, his honor designs to give my person to his son, who cares not a pin for me, and his conscience appropriates my fortune as the provision for his younger children; but if I and my money are to go to ruin they shall go my own way. He will not find me so soon moralized and sentimentalized out of my rights as he found your sister Ellen. What say you? Are you inclined to trust my constancy through all the battleings and all the temptations with which it will be assaulted in the next four years ;

years; or will you make short work of it, and meet me with a chaise and four at the corner of the park wall, at one in the morning, and away to Scotland, and let Guardy try, with all his bay and brown coach horses to overtake us?"

"To night!—this moment! in the face of the sun, in spite of all the guardians and all the coach horses in the world."

"That would be spirited, but no;—we should have scolding, and hectoring, and locking up, and the Lord knows what. I think I could be a match for them there too, but I hate unnecessary trouble, and have no desire to play the part of a distressed damsel; let us do the matter quietly, at one, by the silent light of the moon. O Lord, it does not shine, but no matter, the stars will do as well. I will be punctual to the minute, if you are out of cash I can supply you, I received my quarterage two days

days ago, and having paid no bills, it is luckily entire."

"Well, be it so, at one exactly."

"To a second," there's my hand upon it; and now let us go to our aunts, and our uncles, and our cousins, and our guardians, and behave prettily, as a good little Master and Miss ought to do, and we may laugh at them the more when we are by ourselves.

And thus, in less than ten minutes did these two thoughtless creatures determine upon a step, upon which all the happiness or misery of their future lives depended.

William found no difficulty in engaging a chaise and four to be at the appointed spot, at the hour fixed upon, nor Lady Almeria any in dismissing her maid before she was undressed, nor, when she was gone, in wrapping herself up in her furs, and, with a small bundle of linen in her hand, descending the stairs, opening the door
into

into the garden, or in proceeding from thence to the park, or finally in keeping her appointment with William.

At the corner of the park wall she found him; he received her with all the gaiety of youth, and all the raptures of a lover, they put themselves into the chaise together, and before Lady Almeria was missed in the morning, had proceeded too far on their way to Scotland to give any hopes of success from a pursuit.

• Whatever confusion the discovery of their flight might occasion in the family at Oakley, or whatever inward vexation it caused Lord Villars, who thus saw a final end to all his ambitious projects, yet the nearness of the connexion in all the individuals who composed that family, prevented any violent display of disappointment or chagrin. Lord Villars thought proper to gloss over the matter with an assurance, that although the respect that he had for the trust
reposed

reposed in him by Lady Almeria's father, would have prevented his consenting to such a match, yet the regard that he entertained for the interests of his nephew, made him, since it had been concluded without his concurrence, sincerely rejoice in it.

With an air of acting under these feelings, he made, though something with an ill grace, his congratulations to Mr. Mordaunt, and Mr. Mordaunt with infinitely more sincerity assured him, that had the connexion depended upon him, it had never taken place, and indeed the deep sigh that the reflection upon the misery that an ill-judged marriage can occasion, drew from him, evinced, that neither the splendor of Lady Almeria's birth, or the greatness of her fortune, compensated in his opinion for the lightness of her mind and the unfeelingness of her heart.

The

The satisfaction, however, of Mrs. Mor-daunt, who judged very differently, knew no bounds, and Lady Villars could not help joining (though from very different motives) in her pleasure.

The fate of Lord Villars, upon this occasion, was peculiarly hard. While half the world called his honesty in question for having sacrificed the interests of his ward to those of his nephew; the other half arraigned his prudence in suffering such a prize to go out of his own family; these censures were equally unfounded. He had spared no pains to preserve Lady Almeria from his nephew, he had left no art un-essay'd to secure her to his son.

This event affected Ellen very sensibly; she could not but be pleased that Henry was relieved from all persecution on Lady Almeria's account, and that he was safe from the possibility of yielding to it; but the very unfavorable opinion she had of Lady Almeria's

Almeria's character, and which a farther knowledge of her had confirmed, filled her mind with the most lively apprehensions for the happiness of her brother.

The young couple, however, were welcomed on their return from Scotland, without much reproach on any side, the necessary arrangements for their establishment were made, and harmony seemed restored to all the parties concerned.

Another event which happened in the family of Ellen, at this time, occasioned much more serious consternation and distress.

Mrs. Mordaunt had long had the mortification of being witness to the misery and poverty of her eldest daughter; no one reproached her as the cause, but, notwithstanding her natural indifference to every sorrow that did not attack her personally, she could not avoid making herself the
most

most severe reproaches; she now saw the fatal consummation of her ill-laid plans of ambition and vanity. The miserable daughter was returned upon their hands; the unprincipled man, whom she had chosen for her husband, having collected the remnants of his ruined fortune, had left his wife and two children to beggary, and had quitted England, as he said, for ever.

Mr. Mordaunt was little able to bear this additional burthen, there was however no alternative: His daughter and her children were starving, Groby Manor was the only asylum open to them, to Groby Manor therefore after a visit of three months to Ellen, Mr. Mordaunt conducted his wife and the rest of his family.

CHAP. IV.

"We know each other's faces for our hearts."

SHAKESPEARE.

ELLEN and Sir William were now left alone, and Ellen had leisure to look around her and consider the duties and engagements that her new situation called her to the performance of.

In the scheme of happiness, that in consenting to a marriage with Sir William Ackland, she had planned for herself, a very prominent feature had been the regular and systematic assistance she should be able to administer to the wants, both of mind and
estate

estate, of her poor neighbours. In the fulness of her benevolent self-gratulation, she had said, "when the ear hears me, it shall bless me; when the eye sees me, it shall give witness to me; the blessing of him who is ready to perish, shall come upon me, and I will cause the widow's heart to sing for joy."

In her imagination she educated the young, she encouraged the middle-aged, and she supported the old. She saw the neat cottage arise at her command, the orderly arranged bee-hive rest against the wall, a source at once of pleasure and of profit; the little flower plat put forth its beauties, the orchard yield its fruits, and the virtues of integrity and industry lead content, health and affluence in their train.

Such were the visions that filled the mind of Ellen, who, wholly insensible to every happiness she could not communicate,

thought she placed her own felicity on the surest basis, when she extended it to others.

Such were the visions that had filled the mind of Ellen before her marriage, and amidst the hurried and busy scenes that had held her almost wholly engaged in what appeared more personally to concern herself for the first three months after it took place, she had by no means lost sight of them.

In all her excursions in the environs of Oakley, she had looked around her with reference to the favorite object that filled her mind; she had endeavoured to make some inquiry into the situation of the cottagers, and to form an acquaintance with the poorest of her neighbours, but she found difficulties that had never occurred to her imagination.

The long residence of Sir William abroad, and the character of his immediate ancestors, who had spent little of their time at
their

their principal country residence, and who had bestowed less of their thoughts upon the wants and claims of the poor that surrounded it, had long occasioned Oakley to be forgotten by the diseased and necessitous, and had made its owners to be considered as hard and selfish people of fashion, who regarded their estate no farther than as it could furnish the supply to their pleasures or their vices. There were no old servants to whom Ellen could apply for information, how to direct her benevolence; her household consisted of a set of domestics whom Sir William had collected upon his marriage, all strangers to that neighbourhood, and indifferent to its interests. The steward was a man whom Sir William had brought out of Wales, professedly because he should have no predilection for any of those with whom he would have to deal. Sir William knew as little of the residents on his estate, as any of his dependants, farther than if they paid their rents well or ill; and whenever Ellen endeavoured to lead

him to think upon the subject, or to open her own plans, he either repressed her by a look of disapprobation, or laughed her out of countenance on the taste she had of becoming a Lady Bountiful.

Ellen willingly imputed this backwardness to what she still believed Sir William must think right, and would therefore in time pursue, to the contrary habits in which he had been so long engaged, to the different solitudes that at present occupied him, and the novelty of a country life, and country cares; to her he was lavish, and therefore she could distribute her guineas around her to the relief of immediate and importunate distress, and with this she endeavoured to rest satisfied, until time would enable her to mature her plans of more permanent assistance; assistance that would equally relieve the distresses of indigence, correct the errors of ignorance, and reclaim the wanderings of vice.

As

As Sir William and Ellen rode or walked out together, she would ask questions of the women or children that fell in her way, or would stop and enter any cottage that either from its neatness or desolation particularly drew her attention: but Sir William betrayed the greatest impatience on her thus withdrawing her attentions one moment from him. He seemed enraptured to have her left to himself, and as if he could not endure that even her duties should share her with him. The perfect indifference, or marked disapprobation, with which he heard her tales of distress, and her projects for relieving the sufferers, awakened Ellen to a most painful conviction that she must consider herself as sufficiently happy, if she were allowed in silence and unobserved as it were, to pursue them, but that she must not hope from Sir William either concurrence or applause. Ellen here first tasted of those waters of disappointment, which were afterwards to flow with so full a stream.

The affection she entertained for Sir William was composed of confidence and benevolence; of a sense of the virtues she believed he possessed, and of the gratification that his manners and conversation afforded to her taste. On this affection she had boldly promised herself happiness in her connexion with him, notwithstanding the decided preference she had formerly entertained for Henry. She looked around her, and saw a very sufficient degree of happiness attached to the state of marriage, where the contracting parties were well known not to have united themselves with the objects of their first affections; and she religiously believed that felicity depended much more upon the qualities of the husband, than upon the accidental circumstance of his having been the first person whose merit had made an impression upon the heart of the wife. "Sir William is worthy, is pleasing," said Ellen, "and I shall be happy." Nothing could have been more just than her conclusion, had her premises been firm: but if
the

the virtues were to disappear on which her confidence and her benevolence rested, how inadequate to her happiness would be that affection which had nothing left for its support but the external graces of manner and conversation.

Ellen soon found the whole scheme of her happiness must be incomplete, but she still flattered herself (for she was young, and had all that sanguineness of disposition that accompanies the warmest philanthropy) that some parts were yet in her power. She had promised herself indeed that Sir William would go hand in hand with her in her virtues, as well as her pleasures; but if she could not accomplish the first, she yet did not despair of the second, and was not without hope that by this circuitous road she might at length lead him to the point she wished, she therefore eagerly concurred with him in a design he had formed, of building her a dairy-house; but the ostentation he displayed in the manner of doing

it, and the parade he made of studying her taste, while he shewed the most unequivocal dissatisfaction if that taste differed in the smallest degree from his own, effectually sickened poor Ellen of the dairy-house long before it was finished, and she never drank one bowl of cream within its walls, unconaminated by the effects of Sir William's selfishness, violence, or jealousy.

Every day brought the disappointed Ellen fresh proof of all those failings in the mind of him whom she had engaged to love and respect.

His expences flowed but in the single channel of self-gratification. They reached *her* indeed, because to ornament and indulge her made at present a principal part of his gratification; but to have pleasures, however innocent or praise-worthy, that she did not refer to him, she soon discovered would be considered as a crime.

From

From the softest manners and most courtly address, she frequently saw him, on the slightest provocation from a servant, become furious and abusive, and she could not conceal from herself, that in his dealings with his dependants he was oppressive and tyrannical.

Ellen was the admiration and the love of the neighbourhood; her youth and gaiety of disposition led her to participate in all pleasures that were offered her, and to promote them by every means in her power. Sir William soon taught her, for no one could be more quick in taking a hint, that such gaiety and such good neighbourhood, were displeasing to him; and Ellen quickly withdrew from her usual parties. To have made such a sacrifice to any reasonable feeling in the breast of Sir William, would have cost Ellen nothing: it was the consciousness that she made it to the hydræ-headed monster, Jealousy, that gave it any sting.

Of whom, it will be asked, was Sir William jealous? Of every body, of every *thing* that contributed to the pleasures of Ellen, independent of his agency.

All the unfavorable suspicions relative to Sir William's heart and temper, which had in a vague and doubtful form arisen in her mind before her marriage, the occurrences of every day now gave shape and stability to, and Ellen had not been married six months before she found herself involved in the difficult task of keeping alive, by every artifice in her power, her affection for a man, who might, had he pleased, in half that time, have secured her heart immovably his own for ever; but the efforts of Sir William seemed directed, if indeed they had any direction, rather to destroy than to excite or nourish love.

On the successful cultivation of her affection for her husband, Ellen knew that all her happiness, and, she feared, much of the
the

the performance of her duty, depended. She had, it is true, been only acquainted with disappointment, and she had proved herself equal to the severest self-denial. But her sorrows had then found the softest soother, and her virtuous resignation the warmest panegyric, in the kindness and partiality of her father; in the bitterest moments of her distress, in the most laborious of her struggles, his sympathy and his approbation had stilled the voice of complaint, and smoothed the rugged road of virtue. In the trials that she now foresaw awaited her, she could hope for no such support, for no such encouragement. Her first duty was concealment:—The most wilful blindness with respect to herself, and the most inviolable silence with respect to others, was the first, the indispensable rule by which she was henceforth to form her conduct.

But, feeling, how could she persuade herself she did not feel? And, suffering, how could she be silent? Disappointed, how

could she put on the air of satisfaction? And losing all on which she could ground esteem, how could she preserve love? These were points of constant and painful doubt and deliberation—but more immediate evil pressed upon her.

Where she could not love she could derive no satisfaction from being beloved; she felt that it was not the virtues of her heart, nor even the powers of her understanding, that made her so much the object of passion to Sir William; she was thoroughly awakened to the conviction that the solicitude which in the early days of their acquaintance he had discovered as to her real character, and upon which she had afterwards reflected with so much satisfaction, as a proof that his affection for her was founded upon those qualities, of which he would be the more assured the more he knew her, was in fact nothing more than a selfish anxiety, lest in the apparently gentle and complacent virgin, he should hereafter discover

cover the arrogant and self-willed wife. In a regulated temper he saw a security for his domestic peace; in soundness of principles he beheld the guarantee of his honor; and in his systematic search for a wife, by whom to give an heir to his estate, he had, in respect to character, looked no farther.

In fixing upon Ellen he had been determined, by finding reason to believe, than in sweetness of temper, and in goodness of heart, she yielded the palm to no one. He had warily decided to fix upon a wife before he was in love, and Ellen's person, that had at first appeared to him rather simply pleasing than beautiful, seemed calculated to gratify his eye, without intoxicating his senses. But although Ellen did not seize the soul with the first glance, her's was even a more dangerous fascination—the charms of her conversation, the graces of her manner, the winning sincerity and modest frankness of her character, all conspired to render her irresistible, and to give her

her that power over the mind which beauty alone had never bestowed. Sir William had become madly in love, and no sentiment in the breast of Ellen, not wholly correspondent to that which he felt for her, could satisfy his desires, or lull his jealousies to sleep.

In the well-governed mind of Ellen this was a passion that could find no admittance. No merit whatever could have excited it. How impossible then was it that she should feel such love for a man, who every day lost ground in her esteem, not only by his conduct toward others, but even towards herself.

Sir William in having become a lover had retained his dread of being made a dupe to the passion of love; hence even his fondness was captious, and his indulgence tyrannical; and Ellen, who in marriage had sought a friend, found by turn only a lover or master.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

“ How small, of all that human hearts endure,
“ That part which Kings or Laws can cause or cure.”

GOLDSMITH.

IT was in making these mortifying discoveries that Ellen spent the first six months after her marriage.

Disappointed in her schemes of benevolence, mistaken in the character of her husband, dissatisfied with herself, she was sometimes tempted to arraign her own conduct in having married Sir William. But this was an idea that her good sense easily corrected.

Keeping

Keeping fast to principles, she knew herself unaccountable for events. If she had been mistaken, it was from no want of due consideration, from no precipitancy of action, produced by improper motives. She reviewed her conduct, and found, that being placed again in the same circumstances, and assisted by the same lights, she should again act the same. This conviction in part calmed her mind. What appeared so reasonable she was persuaded must have a sufficient portion of good in it, to satisfy a rational creature, she endeavoured to find out his good.

She considered that her's was no uncommon case; that marriage-discontent was a weed that found nourishment in en every foil; that it sprang up alike in the fields of love, and in the wilds of ambition and avarice; that no foresight could stifle it, no prudence eradicate. If her own marriage furnished an example that the coolest investigation was not sufficient to guard from

the

the most fatal mistakes in a matrimonial choice, her father's equally condemned the yielding to the blind impulse of passion.

“There are evils,” said she, “that no human foresight can teach us to avert, that no purity of intention, can enable us to escape. In the conduct under such evils lies our trial, and the foundation of our future reward or punishment.

This thought brought with it a train of the most anxious sollicitudes. Ellen had all the mistrust of herself that true humility and earnest desire to do right ever induces. To guard herself from that acute sense of her sorrow that might lead to faulty regrets, or culpable impatience, she carefully avoided every exaggeration of her disappointment that fancy could have suggested; she would not allow herself to think her's a peculiar misfortune, or attended with any particularly aggravating circumstances; she repulsed from her mind all anticipations,
and

and all retrospects ; she made every hour bear its own burthen, and, as much as in her power, was ready to accept the present good, without perversely dwelling upon the past, or anxiously conjecturing the future.

If Sir William's ill humour, or his fondness, (for effects were often the same when causes were different) put her out of her way of virtue or of pleasure, she sought some other path, which might lead, though not so directly, to her point. His ill humour she endeavoured to disarm by complaisance, and by gaiety, and to meet his fondness with the genuine satisfaction of reciprocal love. But this was the most difficult part of her task. Could she have esteemed him, his harshness and his unreasonableness with respect to herself, she could have more easily borne, and would hope to have subdued ; but in losing her esteem for him, she lost this hope, and in losing this hope, she lost the power of returning his passion with any but dissembled kindness.

Thus

Thus Ellen, with the most sincere and upright of human hearts, saw herself obliged to cultivate hypocrisy as a virtue ; but that which was a crime in others, was in her only a misfortune.

From a never ceasing succession of disappointments, and from the accumulated weight of difficult duties, Ellen was somewhat relieved by her removal to town. The novelty of the scene, the gaiety of the amusements, the objects of splendour and curiosity with which she was surrounded, filled and amused her mind : Sir William too seemed to have left much of his ill humour and narrowness of heart in the country, the air of London appeared to be more congenial to his character, and to call forth all the amiable parts of it ; his liberality and gaiety revived, his money flowed freely round him, his house was open to the best society, his entertainments were elegant, and his establishment splendid.

But

• But the principal of all this was little suited to that on which Ellen acted, and on which she wished him to have acted. "This, this," would he say to her, "is life! I grudge every guinea I expend in the country; I hate that my money should be swallowed in thick ale down the throats of stupid country oafs, or be wasted in courting a popularity, which is both the ruin and disgrace of whoever enjoys it."

"But in the improvement of the beauties of nature," said Ellen, "or in the relief of the distresses of sickness, or age, money will not be misapplied even in the country."

"What beauties of nature are comparable to those displayed in Hyde Park, or Kensington Gardens? And what distresses are those that the poor laws do not amply provide for? There is no other country in Europe where there is such a provision made for the poor, by the laws, as in England;

no

no country that can vie with it in public institutions for the relief of all kinds of misery ;—I approve all this, but having contributed my part to these institutions I have done enough ; I have done what I can afford, and private charities I am convinced are only the nourishers of idleness and the dupes of imposition.”

Ellen did not press the subject, but she could not but observe to herself, that the man who did not think two hundred pounds too much to expend in one evening’s amusement in London, could not, with much appearance of truth, say, he had done all he could afford towards relieving the distresses of his fellow creatures.

It was one of Sir William’s favorite maxims that money spent in luxury was of more use, than if given in charity ; and he would point out to Ellen, with a triumphant air, the splendor and richness of the shops, and ask her, if she did not think that those who contributed

contributed to the support of them were of infinitely more use to society, than all the good housewives and Lady Bountifuls that ever were born.

Ellen was to wise to argue with selfishness and prejudice : “ Could the whole world be at London, my dear Sir William,” she would say, “ your argument might be conclusive ; but after doing all we can to the support of these manufacturers of the luxuries of life, there will still remain a large country world, who will perish for the want of the necessaries of it, if those of superior fortunes do not sometimes turn their thoughts from the shop to the cottage.”

These kind of conversations made their rambles through London but little pleasing to Ellen, but she seemed to follow Sir William’s lead, took more than usual care of the elegance of her appearance, cultivated, her inclination for amusement, and sought by every means in her power to do honor

to

to Sir William's taste, and to support her part in the society he had introduced her to.

In the perpetual crowd in which she lived there seemed to be little probability she should make any selections that could alarm his jealousy, or wound his self-love; she had not time to know any one well enough to become attached to them. Her time and her thoughts were taken up by a perpetual succession of engagements, but she had too good health and spirits to be easily tired; and a person of Ellen's quickness of parts and cultivated understanding found, even in the promiscuous crowd of triflers and simpletons, many persons from whom she reaped both advantage and amusement.

If Ellen's heart was heavy in scenes, where from her youth, her attractions, and the advantages with which she appeared, she ought to have felt only self-gratulation and pleasure, it was not from any retrospect

trospect in which she indulged herself, but from the immediate weight which the conviction of the real character of the man on whom she was to depend for happiness, and with whom she was to pass her life, had fixed there : To love those with whom she was intimately connected was indispensable to the felicity of Ellen. This the character of Sir William made impossible ; and hence Ellen, with every other blessing which human beings implore, was wretched.

But Ellen was not wretched alone. Neither the hopeless state to which he was reduced, nor the fortitude he had exerted, had been able to restore to Henry his peace of mind. The marriage of Lady Almeria had been a momentary relief to him, but like the remission of a fever, the disorder seemed to have gained strength by its temporary suspension. Had Ellen been unmarried, and the obstacle of Lady Almeria removed, (the thought pierced him
with

with ten thousand stings) another Lady Almeria would have been found, replied his reason; Lady Almeria was not so resolutely chosen as Ellen rejected.

“Be it as it may,” said he to himself, “the die is cast, my fate is determined; I will follow the track I have chalked out for myself.”

“In pursuance of this resolution he had visited his family, he had been kindly received, he had endeavoured to rejoice in the kindness, and to busy himself in the interests of those around him: But the character of Henry was gone; his gaiety, his impetuosity, his social humour, his openness of heart were no more; an invincible gravity had taken their place, and a cold reserve to all, with a chilling indifference to every thing around him, marked all his actions. He rather appeared however to have lost the relish for pleasure than to shun it, he affected nothing but from

the genuine overflowing sorrows of his heart; he was incapable of taking interest in any thing. There were times when he felt ashamed of being thus overcome with his feelings, and then he made some more vigorous efforts to recover the natural tone of his mind. He imagined he should be more likely to do so were he again to see, and accustom himself to the presence of Ellen.

“Henceforward,” said he to himself, “she is to be nothing to me but the highly cherished remembrance of an invaluable blessing lost for ever. Let me familiarize myself to that dear picture, it may be a means of rendering the sense of my loss less bitter.”

Under the influence of these thoughts he came to town: It was easy for him to see Ellen every day without being observed by her, and when he had subdued the at first ungovernable tumults that the sight of her for the several first times had occasioned, he
resolved

resolved to present himself before her. He remembered the last words he had ever heard her utter, "I am going no where but where if you please you may accompany me." I may see her still, thought he, as a friend I may see her; and the friendship of Ellen is worth the love of all her sex beside.

One evening as Ellen was coming out of her box at the Opera, accompanied by Lady Almeria, Henry appeared at the door.

"See, Sir Doleful Dismal!" said Lady Almeria, "do you know you have quite spoiled that man?"

Ellen involuntarily stopped; she could not for an instant move on; but Henry, who had been learning his lesson, approached her; he had rather the air of a person who was accustomed to see her every evening, than of a lover, who now, for the first time after their separation, beheld the beloved object that fate had torn from his

arms, without being able to dislodge her from his heart.

He inquired after her health; he asked how she liked the Opera; he desired to know if he could be of any use; and all this before Ellen, astonished and pained by the profound gravity and coldness of his manners, had sufficient presence of mind to utter a word.

“How you two look!” said Lady Almeria laughing, “dear she’s very well; she has been enchanted with the Opera, and if you will see for her carriage you’ll do us a favor.”

Henry disappeared like an arrow out of a bow. In spite of all his preparation the scene was too much for him, nor could he have borne it a moment longer.

“How very ill Mr. Villars lookt!” said Ellen, endeavouring to recover herself.

“And

“ And how very ill Lady Ackland looks!” returned the unmerciful Lady Almeria, “ here child, take my salts; if those impertinents were to come by just now, who were disputing the other night whether you wore rouge, the wager would be decided in a minute.”

“ How you rattle, I want no salts.”

“ No to be sure,—well, don’t be afraid, I won’t tell the old gentleman at home.”

“ I must beg, Lady Almeria,” said Ellen, earnestly, “ that you will not speak so, you know I will not suffer it.”

“ Well then I *will* tell him: Will that please you? There’s no knowing how to deal with you sentimental people.”

Just then some gentlemen of their acquaintance inquired whether they should call their servants. Ellen thankfully ac-

cepted the offer, but Lady Almeria said, "How can you be so rude, don't you know poor Sir Doleful is gone on the same errand? he'll be in despair if you run away without seeing him!"

Henry at that moment returned, and saying the coach was then at the door, took Ellen's hand to lead her to it; it was with some difficulty he got her through the crowd, and the embarrassments they were in from that circumstance, relieved them both from the greater embarrassments of their own minds.

As he put her into the coach, "May I visit you?" said he, "and will you introduce me to Sir William?"

"Undoubtedly, with the greatest pleasure," said she; it was all she could say, for Lady Almeria followed her, and the coach drove off.

CHAP. VI.

"Self-harming jealousy! fie, beat it hence."

SHAKESPEARE

LADY ALMERIA accompanied Ellen home, nor did she spare her railery: they were engaged to meet a party at supper, but as it was somewhat early, nobody happened to be arrived, and they therefore found Sir William, who was just returned from his dinner society, alone.

Ellen would have chosen not to have mentioned Henry's name before Lady Almeria, but as she was confident it would come out in the course of the evening, that she had met with him, she thought it most

prudent to speak, with all the indifference she could assume, of the circumstance herself.

“ I have seen Mr. Villars,” said she to Sir William, “ and he has desired me to introduce him to you.”

“ Oh ! I wish you had seen them both,” cried Lady Almeria, “ one so grave, the other so pale—Bow goes his Worship, courtsey goes her Ladyship—you would have sworn they had not seen each other this three hundred years, and were not overjoyed at the meeting now. Well, I protest I don’t wonder Ellen chose you, if she could have any notion what kind of man Henry would become, for I protest I think you ten times the more agreeable person I vow.”

“ Did you say you would introduce Mr. Villars to me ?” asked Sir William very gravely, without regarding Lady Almeria.

“ I did

"I did," said Ellen.

"Why, can you have any objection?" said Lady Almeria, "Ellen you know jilted him for you."

"What nonsense you talk, Lady Almeria?" said Ellen.

"She certainly does not talk truth," said Sir William, with the same gravity as before. And, here much to the relief of Ellen, they were joined by more company, and the evening passed as usual.

When they retired to their own apartments, Ellen remarked a gloom upon Sir William's countenance, that she had never before observed since their arrival in London. She endeavoured to dissipate it by more than usual cheerfulness on her part, but he seemed to regard her with an eye of suspicion, and preserved a gloomy
E 5 silence.

silence. Ellen hesitated whether she should seem to remark this change in his humour, and endeavour to regain his confidence, and dissipate his chagrin, by explicit declarations of unalterable attachment.

But the case between them was much changed, from what it had been at the period when she had last seen Henry, and when she had held this conduct with advantage. Sir William at that moment possessed her esteem and warmest friendship; now he had nearly lost both one and the other: With truth could she have promised inviolable constancy, but to speak of an unshaken attachment which no longer subsisted, seemed adding hypocrisy to unkindness; the professions she had formerly made him, had flowed freely from her heart, now they would be uttered with embarrassment and coldness; the fears which seemed to oppress him, she had regarded with compassion; the suspicions that

that he now evidently entertained, she considered as injurious; they appeared but new marks of that narrow and selfish mind, the effects of which she had every day reason to deplore.

The debate whether she should conquer such feelings, or yield to them, held her so long, that before she was aware her silence was as marked as Sir William's, and they both retired to rest with equal disinclinations to sleep.

Some few hours of uneasy thought restored to Ellen her usual calm of mind.

However oppressed her heart might feel, by the afflictive change that appeared to be wrought in the character of Henry: and however alarmed, and somewhat offended she might be by the suspicions to which she was aware Sir William had yielded; yet her confidence that her conduct would

never justify the one, and her hope that time might bring some alleviation of the other, enabled her wholly to suppress her resentment, and so far to overcome her sorrow, as to banish from her countenance and manner every appearance of it. In the course of her reflections she had also made some that had softened her heart toward Sir William.

Oh! thought she, that he would but let me love him. The heart that can form such a wish is not far from its gratification, and it was with unaffected tenderness that Ellen proposed to Sir William to pass the morning in an excursion some miles out of town, which he had talked of a few days before: but Sir William coldly repulsed her by an air of scornful indifference, and by saying he had engagements elsewhere.

Elsewhere he went, for he quitted Ellen the moment breakfast was over, and she
saw

saw him no more in the course of the morning.

Ellen had previously dedicated this morning to some home occupations, but the tumult of mind Sir William's unkind behaviour occasioned, with the train of dangerous reflections it drew after it, made her afraid to trust herself with herself for a whole morning. The moment, therefore, that she could compose herself, after his departure, she ordered her carriage, and continued to find occupation from home till a late hour.

On her return, the first card she saw was that of Mr. Villars, but she had little time to think of this circumstance when she found to her surprise that Sir William was not yet returned home.

They were engaged to dine at her brother's, but Ellen having waited in vain beyond all dinner time, for the return of Sir William,

William, she found herself so inexpressibly uneasy, that she was in no condition to keep her engagement, she therefore excused herself on the score of indisposition; and with a heart oppressed by fears and apprehensions, to which she scarce dared to give a name, she awaited with a degree of excruciating impatience, she had never before felt, the return of Sir William.

The clock had struck nine when she heard his knock at the door; she ran to the top of the stairs to meet him, and catching hold of his hand, "How glad I am to see you, where, where have you been?"

"I have been at your brother's," said he coldly, "but I could not stay when I heard you were ill; are you better?"

"But where were you all this morning? Why did you not come home to dress?"

"I was

“I was kept late in the city; I knew your brother would excuse me: But what’s the matter? What kept you away?”

While Ellen detailed her fears, and her uneasiness, Sir William regarded her with an air as if he doubted the truth of what she said.

“I thought,” returned he, “you had been above the foolish fears of your sex; it is a pity you gave way to them in this instance, you have missed seeing an old friend—Mr. Villars was at your brother’s.”

The insulting unkindness of these words filled Ellen’s eyes with tears.

“No, Sir William,” said she, “I have missed nothing that I regret on that account, I assure you: I see how your suspicions wrong me—but, receive my solemn promise, that as far as it depends upon me, I have seen Mr. Villars for the last time.”

“No

"No romantic resolutions, I beg; let me not be made ridiculous by your high-flown virtue. If Mr. Villars be as indifferent to you as he ought to be, and as you have pretended, why should he not visit at my house like any other person of your or my acquaintance?"

"I might have asked you that question, for the objection seemed to come from you."

"And you did not know Mr. Villars was to be at your brother's to-day? And you did not stay away on that account?"

"No, upon my honour—I stayed away for the reasons I have given you."

"Then I ask your pardon; I have been too hasty in my conclusions perhaps: Mr. Villars is now my acquaintance, you will consider him henceforward as such; and if you would have me believe that you regard him in no other light, you will make him

as much, and neither more or less of your parties than you do any other person, who has the same claim to your attentions."

This was almost too much for Ellen; but subduing every resentment, and every tender feeling, she said, "I will do in this, and all other things, as nearly what you wish as I can, and where I fail, I hope your candour and your love will be heard in my excuse."

"Oh! Ellen," said Sir William, grasping her hand, "could you but love me as I have loved you!—But I am a fool to expect it—I make myself ridiculous—I'll change my dress and we'll go together to Mr. Curzon's, and then let this nonsense be forgotten."

"Oh!" cried Ellen to herself, with a deep sigh, as he left the room, "how impossible it is to love this man."

At

At Mr. Curzon's they met Lady Almeria.

"So, so, you are not sick after all," said she, "I never thought you were; I'll lay my life you were afraid of meeting your old love."

Ellen would have explained how the unaccountable absence of Sir William had alarmed her.

"Yes, yes, very likely—I don't believe a word of it though: But come, if you are not really afraid, shew it now, for there he is. In spite of his grave face I would bring him with me. Thank my stars, Mordaunt is not jealous."

Although this was not professedly said in the hearing of Sir William, yet was he so near that he lost not a word of it. He now walked on, and Lady Almeria said, "I was running away, for the place is as dull as a quaker's meeting: I cannot get a party

party at cassino, but with old Dowagers, the very sight of whom gives me the vapours; but now you are come I shall have a little chat; or, come, let us sit down to cassino, and Mr. Villars shall be of our party, though he is almost as bad as an old Dowager too, but perhaps your presence will enliven him."

Mr. Villars then came up, and with great gravity, hoped Ellen was better.

"Bless me, she was never ill?" said the ever talking Lady Almeria, "I told you so all along."

"I hope Mr. Villars will, in this case, rather believe me than you," said Ellen with a smile, "but I am now quite well."

This was the first time that Ellen had ever called Henry Mr. Villars, when speaking of him, the word ran through his veins like ice.

"Lady

"Lady Almeria is so good as to answer for every body," said he, faintly smiling, "it is no wonder that with so much business upon her hands, she is not always quite accurate."

"I see you improve," returned she, "I have not heard you attempt being saucy this age; but you must play at cassino with us. I have been doing nothing 'till I am tired to death." "Let Sir William make a fourth," said Ellen."

"No, indeed," returned Lady Almeria, sharply, "I have had a dose of Sir William to-day, I can tell you; he really grows intolerable."

"I hope you intend I should love you better for such freedoms?" said Ellen.

"You'll not love me the worse; besides, I *may* speak what I think, whatever you *may* do."

"I have

“I have not quite lost that privilege,” returned Ellen, “and I tell you plainly that if you mean I should be of your cassino party, you must be a little more agreeable.”

“Agreeable! I’ll be as agreeable as an angel:—And so go, that’s a good soul, (speaking to Henry) and find us a fourth—but not Sir William.”

However Henry might take most of these insinuations, for Lady Almeria’s accustomed rattle, he could not but observe the shade of chagrin and melancholy that rushed on Ellen’s brow, and he observed it with an anxious curiosity to know its real cause. He returned in a moment, bringing Sir William with him.

“See, I have obeyed you,” said he to Lady Almeria.”

“Obeyed me? No, I protest against playing with husbands and wives: Sir William,

liam, you are the only man in the room I object to."

"I must hope, then," said he with a laugh, "that you are the only lady in the room that *would* have made the objection; and even that stretch of vanity won't console me under the misfortune of your displeasure." "Oh! I did not object to you positively, only relatively, in your capacity of husband."

"There may be something flattering in that objection," returned he, "and now let you and me try to beat Lady Ackland and Mr. Villars."

This little party at cards diffused something like ease amongst Henry, Ellen, and Sir William, in its consequence, though it was little short of martyrdom at the time; and from this night Henry visited and was received at Sir William's house on the footing of a common acquaintance.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

“ Ne scusa accetto che fosse amore

“ Stato cagion di così grave errore ;

“ Che amor dè far gentileun cor villano,

“ E now far d' un gentil contrario effetto.”

ARIOSTO.

AS Ellen and Henry now saw each other almost every day, the emotion with which they at first met wore off by degrees: But Henry lost nothing of his gravity, and he could not but perceive that it seemed in some degree contagious.

Ellen's both natural and assumed spirits too often sunk under the weight of every day's vexations that she received from Sir William

William : But Henry, who knew nothing of all this, fluctuated between hope and fear, that the pensive thoughtfulness that sometimes overspread her countenance, might be imputable to the recollection of past scenes. He wished her happy, he wished her upright, but he knew not how to wish her wholly forgetful of his former sufferings, or wholly insensible to his present. Nothing, however, arose, that could lead to the clearing his doubts. Ellen did not appear to shun, or to seek his company ; she conversed with him with her usual frankness, treated him as her relation and friend, but seemed to have forgotten he had ever been her lover ; yet he often saw her eyes fill with tears, and a sigh of dissatisfaction would sometimes escape her.

He turned his attentions toward Sir William, but could see nothing in his conduct that could give him reason to suppose the source of her unhappiness lay there. Sir William was in fact an impenetrable man, he

he knew how to conceal from the whole world his real disposition; and he had besides habitually different manners, and a different countenance for his public and his private hours.

He dreaded to draw on himself the ridicule that is attached to the character of a jealous husband, and he wished his acquaintance, especially those of his own standing in life, to believe him perfectly satisfied in his choice of a wife.

The fangs of jealousy, however, struck deeper and deeper into his heart every day: The more he knew of Henry, the more he knew him to be the man most suited to the sentiments and feelings of Ellen: In accidental conversations he was frequently struck by the coincidence of their opinions. Their minds seemed to be formed in the same mould, their hearts to beat in unison, their wishes, their pleasures, their pursuits to be the same; the similarity of their

taste, and of their virtues, seemed to form them for each other, and he knew not how to trust, that the latter would be such a barrier between them, as the former would not surmount; yet could not the keen eye of jealousy discover in the conduct of either any thing to reprove.

All was open, frank, and above board; he could not observe that Henry sought Ellen apart from him, or from the rest of the world, nor could he discover in Ellen any affectation of too much or too little solicitude in her intercourse with Henry: But he suspected that he himself lost ground daily in the esteem of Ellen, for he knew that he deserved to do so; and he believed it not in nature that Ellen not loving him, should forget that she had loved Henry. Henry too, so deserving of her love! so almost avowedly considering her as the first of women! He could not have been more perfectly convinced of their mutual intelligence had he received the most unequivocal proofs of it.

Hence

Hence his private hours with Ellen were spent in indirect upbraidings, in cruel insinuations, in direct charges of want of love on her part, which such conduct served completely to verify.

Ellen opposed to all this injustice the calmness which good sense dictates, and the gentleness which a regulated mind inspires. She treated Sir William's unkindness as the effect of a distemper, and she thought she saw no cure for it, but in the most undisguised frankness.

“ You have conceived the most distressing suspicions, would she say to him, “ and the misfortune is the greater since being totally unfounded I know not how to clear myself from them : If you would preserve any of that love in my breast, of the diminution of which you so bitterly complain, you must give it something whereon to feed ; complaints, reproaches, and calum-

nies, were never the fastenance of affection. Take me where you will, I am ready to accompany you to the remotest corner of the world, there I will live only with you and for you : Fix upon any plan of life, where, though excluded from the society and pleasures of it, you admit of its duties, and you will find me ever ready to concur : But let us not continue amid scenes of imagined amusement and real misery, where it is impossible but the very conduct you enjoin me should fill your heart with bitterness, and increase an evil, which can only be cured by the reflections which time and a continued observation on my real character will enable you to make."

This was good advice, but it was the advice of cool reason, not the fervent expostulations of ardent love, suffering under the misery of suspicion ; Sir William therefore rather repented than benefited by it.

Retire-

Retirement, too, was by no means to his taste : He could not have been happy, even in the love of Ellen, if he must only have enjoyed that love in a desert. The world was the theatre on which his talents and his accomplishments were shewn to most advantage ; in the society of men of genius, in the assemblies of people of high rank, in the circle of courts, Sir William had been accustomed to be listened to, and admired ; and it was in scenes such as these that he could alone find happiness. Could Ellen have accompanied him in them, and could he have been convinced that she preferred him to every other man she met there, his happiness would have been complete : But in a solitude the gratification of his vanity was wanting to his felicity ; and in the world, the gratification of his love. Possessed, however, with the opinion, that Ellen's heart was wholly given up to Henry, he no longer felt any pangs from jealousy of which he was not the object, and in removing her from him he removed her from

all whose attention toward her gave him uneasiness; yet to secure his own honor in the preservation of her's, was more a point of delicacy than a cure for the wounds of his mind. Once convinced that she had sacrificed it to her passion for Henry, and he would have found, if not a compensation, at least a gratification in the security of the punishment he meditated; but for the pangs inflicted by a persuasion that he had irrecoverably lost her affection, no distance that he could place between her and Henry, no vengeance that he could pursue, no indemnification he could propose to himself, could heal his sorrows, or restore him to peace. Solitude he would have thought rather favorable than disadvantageous to the sentiments he believed she entertained, and therefore, both to occupy her mind with scenes in which Henry had no share, as well as to gratify her own taste, they removed, on leaving town, to Weymouth.

Ellen,

Ellen, the unhappy victim of this mixture of selfishness and vanity, had flattered herself that she should either have been permitted to have visited Groby Manor, or to have returned to Oakley; but Sir William seemed to have an almost equal aversion to both places.

The benevolent expences of Ellen, at Oakley, in which he had no inclination to join, or desire to countenance, he felt as a reproach to him; and the scenes of Groby Manor he considered as too closely connected with the memory of Henry to be favorable to his interest.

Ellen quitted town without regret, but she did not go to Weymouth without reluctance. The little lightness of heart which she had carried with her to London, had long since been lost in the increasing unkindness of Sir William; the amusements it afforded had lost their novelty, and with their novelty, to a mind so ill at ease as

her's, their power of interesting: But the duties and pleasures of a country life she knew were so suited to her taste, as always to afford employment for her faculties, and gratification to her heart. She had lost the hope of being able to love Sir William, or of awakening in so irrational and so selfish a mind as his, that spirit of justice, from which, even while he continued to love her, she could alone hope for any degree of happiness, and sometimes extending her views into a futurity when probably he would love her no more, she trembled for the situation in which she might find herself.

But Ellen's good sense forbade her to torment herself with the apprehension of any probable evils, and she was more willing to encourage the hope, that if she might be allowed to take up her abode at Oakley, whether Sir William chose to be with her or not, she might always be able to secure to herself a very competent share of content, in the active discharge of her duties.

At

At present she was, however, compelled to give up all thoughts of the quiet and interesting occupations of the country, and to prepare herself for all the fatiguing dissipation, and sickening repetition, of a sea-bathing place.

Ellen had only been a very short time at Weymouth, before she had reason to suppose herself in a circumstance that she believed would give the greatest pleasure to Sir William.

During the first months of their marriage he had expressed an anxious impatience for the prospect of becoming a father, and had more than once testified chagrin and disappointment, when there were no appearances of his soon being one. Ellen herself anticipated a thousand delightful cares and pleasures that would arise from the duties of a mother, and was not shy of owning to Sir William, that the indisposition under which

she then suffered, would probably put him in possession of his wishes.

But this information, far from being received by Sir William with pleasure, seemed to overwhelm him with the sense of some sudden misfortune; his countenance changed, his lips quivered with suppressed emotion, and he had hardly sufficient command of himself to utter a word of kindness or congratulation on the subject.

All this was a perfect enigma to Ellen.— Happily in this instance her innocence defeated her penetration, and after much uneasy conjecture, she rested upon the supposition, (a supposition sufficiently painful) that Sir William having lost all love for her, had with it lost all desire of any farther tie between them. She was confirmed in this idea, when she observed that he rather encouraged than restrained her in riding, walking, and dancing. But Ellen, who began to see that all the felicity of her future
life

life might probably depend upon children, became extremely solicitous not to lose, by any indiscretion of her own, her present promise of such a source of happiness.

Sir William, without seeming to advert to the care she was willing to take of herself, was always projecting some party of amusement; some riding, fishing, or frolicking expedition, that called for exertion of bodily strength. Ellen had very good health, and knew not how to hold herself excused from such engagements, without seeming to take a superfluous and selfish care of an interest which nobody else appeared to think about.

Having spent two months at Weymouth, Sir William formed a party with another family to travel through South and North Wales, to cross the kingdom from Chester to Scarborough, and fully to occupy the time until Christmas, when they were engaged to spend a month with Mr. Mor-

F 6

daunt,

daunt, and Lady Almeria, at their house, in Devonshire.

Ellen ventured to plead for a little rest, and mentioned Oakley, but Sir William told her, that travelling would do her good, and that he had planned the whole scheme entirely on her account.

She was less disinclined to give into it, from the hopes that when they were so far North as Scarborough, she should be able to persuade Sir William to make a visit to Groby Manor. She communicated this hope to her father, and in this hope she performed her peregrination through Wales, with much satisfaction. But by the time they arrived at Scarborough, Sir William declared the season so far advanced, that no consideration would induce him to venture a mile farther North, and under this pretence he hurried her by hasty journies into Berkshire.

Ellen,

Ellen, happily, suffered little by all these journeyings, but when she found herself once again at Oakley, she would have been very happy if she might have remained there for some time; Sir William, however, declared himself impatient to join the society at Stanton Park, and to Stanton Park they accordingly went.

Lady Almeria had filled her house with a numerous party of young dissipated people of fashion: Hunting, riding, shooting, billiards, and shuttlecock, engaged the mornings; the pleasures of an expensive table, high play, music, and dancing, occupied the evenings. Here appeared love in all its degrees, from the serious, sighing, jealous swain, to the pert fluttering coquet, who laughed at the passion she affected to feel.

Mr. Mordaunt and Lady Almeria had long ceased to affect even the semblance of a passion which had carried them so precipitately

pitately into Scotland together, but in having ceased to contribute to each other's pleasures, they had but fallen into a contrary extreme of wishing to interrupt them. He was careless, she indifferent—he coquetted with every pretty woman who would listen to him, and she flirted with all the agreeable men who came in her way.

She had just lain in of a poor neglected little girl, who, confined to the nursery, was seldom visited by her mother. In scenes such as these, where Ellen found so much to disapprove, and so much to lament, this nursery seemed her best refuge, and here she spent many hours every day.

Sir William, since their abode at Weymouth, seemed to have lost much of his former passion for Ellen, yet he could not see her, in such a circle as that with which she was now surrounded, without feeling her superiority—He did feel it—his love seemed to revive, and he often sought her
in

in this same nursery, where she passed so much of her time.

Ellen, who never lost sight of the virtuous desire of being one day able to inspire Sir William with such a way of thinking as would excite and retain her affection, felt her hopes of the approach of so desirable a period spring anew, whenever domestic pleasures, or domestic virtues appeared to engage his attention, or occupy his heart. She was delighted to see him quit the dissipated, and, in fact, vicious society of the drawing-room, or the eating parlour, to seek her in the innocent recesses of the nursery. With sportive fondness she would endeavour to make him take his share in nursing the bantling, and would anticipate their mutual pleasure when they should have such a plaything of their own: But from this subject he always appeared to shrink, and though he followed her to a nursery, rather than be absent from her, he came there only for the purpose of drawing her away from it.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

——“ I’m angling now,
“ Though you perceive me not, how I give line.”

SHAKESPEARE.

ELLEN had now been at Stanton Park more than a month, and the little pleasure she took in the society there, or rather, the positive disapprobation she felt towards most of the individuals that composed it, had caused her, as it were, to fold up her charms and her talents in a civil reserve, that forbade her all familiarity in those who approached her.

At this time Mr. Villars arrived at Stanton Park.

There

There had never been any distinction between Ellen's manners towards him, and towards those, who with him had frequented her house in town: There, whatever difference of character might really exist, in the interchangement of the common-place civilities of an assembled intercourse, little difference could appear: But here, where in the freedom and familiarity of behaviour that prevailed, every vicious principle seemed to be displayed, and every depravity of the heart to be laid open—here indeed there was a decided distinction. When she conversed with Henry, no coldness sat upon her brow, or restrained her tongue, her heart was upon her lips, the smile of approbation dimpled her cheek, and sparkled in her eyes.

Henry came immediately from Groby Manor to Stanton Park. Of Groby Manor, of her father, of her sisters, of her beloved Thorntons, she was never weary of talking: There was no inquiry relative to all these,
that

that was too minute, no circumstance that was not interesting.

In these conversations, it is true, Ellen wished nothing so much as that Sir William should partake; for she wished nothing so much as that they should be equally important to him; but the vivacity that the arrival of Henry seemed to have inspired her with, was a mortal offence to Sir William, and a confirmation, "Strong as proof of Holy Writ," of all he had before suspected.

From this period the most deadly hatred succeeded in the breast of Sir William to that love which he had once felt for Ellen, and from this period he nourished the most determined resolution of revenge.

But Sir William was indeed capable of that hypocrisy, of which he most unjustly suspected Ellen. The dread he entertained of being marked as a jealous husband, enabled

abled him to dissemble, even with her, the pangs that wrung his very soul.

Instead of the conduct he had manifested in town, he continued his newly resumed fondness; frequently made Henry the object of his panegyric; pointed out to her his superiority to those around him, shewed a pleasure in his conversation, and always sought to make Ellen a party in it. To this depth of dissimulation he was instigated, not only by a desire to escape the ridicule of jealousy, but by a hope, that by thus laying all suspicion asleep in the minds both of Henry and Ellen, he should attain a certainty of that, which though he did not doubt, he could by no means prove, and nothing short of proof he knew could bear him out, even in his own opinion, in the course he was resolved to pursue.

The art of Sir William was much more than a match for the ingenuous innocence of Ellen: She entertained not a doubt but that

that he was convinced of the injustice of his former suspicions, and the moment she believed such suspicions were abandoned, she sincerely forgave them; she conceived that he really was well satisfied that she should entertain and manifest towards Henry, that cousinly regard which she had never disavowed, but which, on the contrary, she had always declared she should carry to her grave. On the strictest examination of her heart, she discovered nothing in her sentiments for Henry that she could wish to conceal; and when she beheld, as she believed, Sir William relieved from every jealous doubt, she had on this subject nothing farther to wish. Henry too appeared to have recovered his natural tone of mind, and Ellen secretly congratulated herself on the accomplishment of those hopes which had cheered the darkest gloom of her former sorrows.

Ellen's temper was sanguine—there were moments in which she could have believed
any

any thing as certain, that it was possible the united efforts of virtue and good sense could produce.

“Now,” said she to herself, “I see Henry happy; Sir William will in time be all I wish him; his love for me will be rational as it is tender; he will deserve, and I will give him my whole heart; after all my sorrows, and all my apprehensions, there will not be a happier lot than the one I have drawn.”

It depended wholly on Sir William to have realized this picture of happiness; he chose to convert it into scenes of the most genuine wretchedness.

The delight with which such thoughts often filled the mind of Ellen, as she sat conversing with Sir William and Henry, frequently spread an ineffable air of satisfaction and tenderness over her features.— Henry at these moments beheld her as the
image

image of virtue itself; and Sir William regarded her as the most abandoned of her sex —“ The time will come,” thought he, “ the time will come !”—and in this thought he was able to repress the resentment which swelled his heart almost to breaking.

The task, however, of dissimulation, at length became too painful, and he longed to begin the period of punishment and vengeance. Ellen was to lye-in in town, and to town, for this purpose, she removed about the beginning of February.

CHAP. IX.

- “ Oimè fortuna fella,
“ Che cambio è questo, che tu fai ?
“ Colui.”
“ Che esser dovea, levato m’ hai.
“ Ti par che in luogo, ed investor di quello
“ Si debba por costui, eh’ ora mi dai ?”

ARIOSTO.

FROM the instant of their quitting Stanton Park, Sir William’s behaviour was entirely changed—he seemed not now to wish to disguise the ill opinion he had formed of her. He reproached her explicitly for the pleasure she had manifested in the company of Henry, and he openly exulted in the art with which he had laid her

her caution useless, and by which he had been able to ascertain her real sentiments.

Ellen heard Sir William with an indignant astonishment, that for some time deprived her of the power of speech—She knew not how to defend herself against a charge, the truth of which involved no criminality. She had considered every mark of regard which she had shewn to Henry as sanctioned by Sir William's express approbation, and she knew it did not contain a particle of that kind of love which the most extended of his rights could prohibit.

The resentments of Ellen were always short lived, and even before she had voice to reply to Sir William's injuries, she felt somewhat like compassion, though perhaps a little mingled with contempt, rise in her mind towards him.

“That

“That it can suit your ideas of honour and tenderness,” said she, “to endeavour to betray those who you are bound to defend, is what I can only be sincerely sorry for; but to treat that as a discovery which you owe to your own artifice; that, which at no time has been disavowed on my part, is a vain endeavour to dupe me a second time: Tho’ innocence is unsuspicious, it is not sottish. Be assured you have discovered nothing, for nothing was attempted to be concealed:—From the first hour I accepted your heart, you knew the whole of mine; if you have not secured it your own long before now, the failure has not arisen from my partiality to another, but for the want of those qualities in yourself, on which affection only can be grounded: I have laboured to love you, and never were you so nearly in possession of my heart as at the moment when you have chosen to load me with the most injurious reproaches. What can I say, most unhappy of men, what can I say, but that my

heart shall still be yours, when you know how to deserve it."

Sir William trembled with passion—the truth flashed upon him—it was the lightning's flash that strikes and kills. To believe himself alone accountable for the loss of Ellen's true affections, was a pang of such intolerable anguish, as human nature could not bear. To think her false and worthless was a suffering of a milder kind. Barring his mind against conviction, he gave way to a rage which was only a temporary assuagement of his sufferings, the source in future of the bitterest self-reproach.

The agitation that his violence occasioned to Ellen, threw her into labour: Her situation became critical and hazardous in a very high degree, and Sir William would have almost consented to have seen her in the arms of Mr. Villars, to have been assured of her life. It was not however, by the death of Ellen that heaven had determined to punish Sir William—She was delivered of a boy and declared out of danger.

Amidst

Amidst the varied anguish, composed of grief, terror, and resentment, that filled the mind of Ellen, she experienced as she clasped her child to her bosom, a source of joy which no misfortune that threatened herself alone could embitter; yet she regretted but the more that in the father of her infant she could not love the husband of her choice.

Sir William, under pretence of guarding her from every emotion that might be prejudicial, absented himself for some days from her apartment; and Ellen made use of this interval to bring her mind into such a state of charity with him, as would enable her to receive him, when they did meet, with a kindness, that might shew her disposed to forget all that had passed at their last interview.

She presented his son to him with a faint smile, saying, "Let this be the pledge of oblivion for all that is passed, and the assurance of an unbroken amity for the time to come."

"A son!" said Sir William, looking earnestly in the boy's face.

"Did you not know it was a boy?" said Ellen.

"Yes," returned Sir William, and again repeated, "A son!"

"Dear Sir William, take your child into your arms, the touch of his lips will banish every uneasy thought—I have found them a sovereign panacea."

"So might I too!—"

"Why do you not try then?"

"No, it is a woman's remedy."

"It is a *parent's*," returned Ellen.

"True," said Sir William; but he touched not the child.

Ellen pained, wondering, confused, by a variety of indistinct thoughts, hastily snatched the boy to her heart and burst into tears.

Sir William alarmed, tried to sooth her by every tender expression he could think of; but he did not caress the child, nor did he appear to regard it either as a pledge of oblivion, or as an assurance of amity.

Ellen

Ellen recovered slowly, the anxiety of her mind affected her body; she saw Sir William gloomy and discontented, and though he restrained himself from acts or words of ill humour or reproach, the same dark suspicions seemed to lower in his mind, and the same resentment to possess his breast.

Ellen was now able to go out in her carriage, and she thought it proper no longer to delay making Sir William acquainted with the resolution she had formed: It was not long before he gave her an opportunity of doing so.

On meeting her one day on her return from an airing, he observed that the colour began to return to her cheek, and the usual life to appear in her eye, and he added, in a cold and reproachful tone, "You will soon be able to return to society, you will soon be able to see *all* your friends."

"I have a very few words to say, Sir William, on that subject," returned Ellen,

"and if you are at leisure, be kind enough to hear them now."

"You are not going to make me a speech?"

"I do not deal in oratory," replied Ellen, "what I have to say will be comprised in a very few words."

"Well, Madam," cried he, with an air of provoking mockery, "I attend."

"When first I was made sensible of the unjust ideas that you entertained of my character," said Ellen, "I was led to hope that such jealousy might only be the exuberancy of too ardent a love, and I trusted to that love and my own rectitude for the remedy: When I had reason to think the evil had a deeper root, that it sprang from the constitution of your mind, and that, perhaps, you could not change it, I offered, with the most genuine sincerity, to withdraw with you from the whole world, and to live only for you. This was treated as the flight of an absurd and romantic mind, and I was enjoined to conduct myself to all
with

with whom I conversed without distinction —I obeyed this injunction as far as it was possible to obey it:—The honest affections of the heart, which I had always avowed, and the difference that must arise in our intercourse with the wise, and the foolish, the good and the bad, stood not controuled, nor could they by this injunction. You know if ever my distinction went beyond what such affections and such difference could warrant; and I know, most feelingly, that notwithstanding a conduct resulting from such principles, as will stand the strictest investigation, I have not been able to acquit myself in your opinion: I believe it impossible that you should at this time doubt my honor, but you scruple not to tell me, that I have voluntarily given my affections to another:—What may you not next believe?—I shrink from the thought, and it behoves me to preserve myself from a suspicion that may involve in the effects of its injustice those who are yet unborn: What I once assumed as a

kindness to you, I now ask as a favor and shelter for myself. I will not again join any society, I will not again see any friends that can awaken injurious doubts in your breast. If it is your will that I shall remain in town, I will remain there as a close prisoner in my own house; but if you wish to avoid the appearance of singularity, which this will have to the world, I beg you will suffer me to go down to Oakley, my health will furnish a reasonable pretence for such a seclusion, and there I cannot give you even the shadow of a cause for those jealousies which wrong me, and make you miserable."

Sir William appeared struck with the greatest astonishment, by the calm and impressive statement, that Ellen thus made of her wrongs, and of her conduct: some purpose labouring in his mind seemed, in spite of himself, to be suspended by the power of truth.

"Would you go alone?" said he.

"I shall not be alone, my boy will be
with

with me, and I will yet hope that all love for me is not so extinct in his father's breast, but that he may sometimes be induced to visit us."

A sudden shade of distrust and indignation crossed Sir William's brow.

"You doubt it not,—his father will visit you."

"I hope so," said Ellen warmly. "Then you approve my plan, Sir William?—You will suffer me to remove to Oakley?"

"Yes, to queen it there—to court popularity by insidious charities—to form a party of the scum of the earth—to build your reputation on the downfall of mine."

"Good God!" exclaimed Ellen, then checking herself, "far are all such thoughts from me," said she, "I have no predilection for Oakley; you have an estate in Wales, let me go there—Send me into the North of Scotland—banish me to Ireland—do with me what you will, with this exception only, do not keep me here, and compel me into company, where the purest in-

nocence cannot preserve me from the foulest suspicion."

Again Sir William's resolution seemed to be shaken—he remained silent and thoughtful.

"If I could believe it was prejudice and falsehood—"

"I know not what means to use to convince you it is so, but such as I have used in vain," said Ellen, "it appears to me that your mind is deeply infected with a distemper that nothing but time and your own reflections will cure; let me wait the result of these quietly and inoffensively, far from any possibility, by any manners or conduct of my own, of increasing the evil:—No happiness results to either of us from being now together; on the contrary, so many causes of mutual offence may arise, as may serve definitively to alienate our hearts from each other, and make it impossible at any future period, however distant, to entertain that mutual friendship so essential to our happiness, our virtue, and our reputation."

"Well,"

“Well,” said Sir William, after a moment’s pause, “be it so, the experiment may serve as a trial in more ways than one: But whom do you mean to take into your secret? Who is to be confidant?”

“No one—this is a secret I would willingly conceal from myself, and be assured I will not burthen any one else with the knowledge of it.”

“And shall you not write a pathetic letter to *your cousin*, desiring he will keep out of your way, and bidding him farewell?—And talk of the sacrifice of *friendship* to duty, the hope of better times, when innocence will have all its rights, when you may avow the *esteem* with which you always have been, and always shall be—And so turn a period and make a flourishing conclusion?—Would not this be according to rule?”

“The paroxysm is strong now indeed,” said Ellen, “I will leave you, and wait your decision as to where I shall go.”

“Stay, that may be decided in a moment: Oakley is the best place, your re-

treat there will appear most natural, and raise least conjecture. When shall you be able to go?"

"In less than a week, and I entreat you, Sir William, to let that time be spent with as little discomposure as possible. On my part you shall see nothing but good humour, and if you will permit it, cheerfulness."

"Good God! why should we part?—Oh! Ellen, are you all you seem to be?"

"I hope you will, ere long, be convinced I am; and I think the present arrangement most likely to produce that conviction."

"You wish then to go?"

"I do, but I should not if I could believe that continuing here, I could ward off those unjust thoughts that make us both so miserable."

"I believe you had better go, perhaps I shall sooner come to my senses in your absence; perhaps the present separation may make every future hour we are to spend together happier."

CHAP. X.

"Say, from affliction's various source,

"Do none but turbid waters flow?"

MASON.

IN a few days Ellen left town, for Oakley, taking with her her beloved boy. He seemed the only human being whom she might love unreprieved, or at least the only one for whom her affections were not embittered by some painful reflection.

She could not conceal from herself that Sir William studiously held her apart from her family, and he had so professedly set his face against Miss Thornton, that except one single fortnight which she had spent at Oakley,

ley, Ellen had not seen her since her marriage; nor was he more willing that either of her sisters should be with her, and in the early days of the breaking out of his discontent, he had reproached her for loving her father with a warmer affection than she loved him.

With Lady Almeria who was always surrounded by a society in which he himself found pleasure, and whom he knew Ellen could not love; and with her brother, who shewed not much love to her, he suffered her to associate with that degree of familiarity the nearness of their connexion warranted, but he held her as much as possible aloof from the whole world besides. He wished her to be always in company, but he would have the promiscuous crowd with which he had surrounded her wholly and alike indifferent to her.

A mode of life in which the affections had no share would have been, in itself, extremely irksome to Ellen, and when joined to the more positive evils that Sir William spared

spared not to inflict, became insupportable. At Oakley she seemed to repose as in a secure harbour, after having been long tossed in storms that threatened shipwreck.

She nursed her boy, and this was one reason that was given to the world for her retiring to the country at that season of the year, when every body else was flocking to town. This occupation was a perpetual source of delight and interest to her. Alone at Oakley, she could dedicate the whole of her time and thoughts to so delightful a care, and she saw, or fancied she saw, in the stout limbs, and intelligent sparkling eyes of her darling, the proof and the reward of her more than common love.

Lady Almeria had dragged her poor little baby to town with her, where neglect and want of good air soon reduced it to a very pitiable object. Ellen was told it was ill, and earnestly entreated Lady Almeria to let it join the nursery at Oakley: To this request she readily acceded, and the little

little Almeria was sent down into Berkshire, to add to the cares and pleasures of Ellen.

With her two children, and the various means of occupation which her understanding and her heart provided her with, Ellen began to regain a degree of ease and happiness, which, except at very short intervals, had been long a stranger to her bosom. All remains of resentment towards Sir William entirely subsided; she again flattered herself that if she could once inspire him with a taste for the calm delights of the country, she might be able in time to correct his unhappy aptitude to suspicion, to eradicate all jealousy from his mind, and making him worthy of her love, love him with an affection more reasonable, and as warm as any he had ever felt for her. She congratulated herself on the part she had taken, and was ready to persuade herself that her past vexations were only a more certain road to happiness. She wrote to Sir William frequently, detailing all she did, and recounting the witticisms

ticisms of Almeria, who, however, could not yet speak, and the wonderful tricks and atchievements of her boy. In return, Sir William's letters were short, contained little but the anecdote of the day, and never replied in any way to the domestic and nursery stories which made the subject of Ellen's.

Ellen was willing to lay all this insensibility to the way of life Sir William was engaged in, so unfavorable to the feelings of the parent and the husband, and to hope the cure for all lay in his being made sensible of the superior pleasure that would arise from such feelings, to that which every other gratification apart from them could bestow. In this hope she urged him much to make a visit to Oakley, but hitherto he had attended little to her request.

CHAP. XI.

“ O sommo dio, comei giu digi umani,
“ Spesso offuscato son da un nembo oscuro.”

WHILE Ellen was thus indulging herself in every virtuous propensity, and already began to reap the reward that usually attends the gratification of such propensities, Henry was a prey to the most tormenting disquietude.

On his arrival in town, he had learnt Ellen's removal into the country, and he had heard assigned as a reason for it, her own health, which had suffered much from her confinement, and the cares she had taken upon her with respect to her boy. Nothing could appear more natural than these reasons, and with Henry, who knew Ellen's disposition,

disposition, they would have found, but for one circumstance, a most ready belief.

Sir William's conduct during the time they had all passed in Devonshire together, had compleatly deceived him; he believed that Sir William felt for Ellen all the love that she was so well formed to inspire, and he never had reason to suppose that Ellen did not rejoice in and return his love. But in Henry's opinion it ill consisted with such a mutual affection, that Sir William should suffer Ellen to go without him into the country, in circumstances in which she might be supposed particularly to call for more than common attention, or that he could consent so soon to lose sight of their first pledge of love; a boy too, which is generally as dear to a father as a mother.

It was this circumstance that raised a suspicion in the mind of Henry, that there was something more in Ellen's present retirement than the world in general believed; yet was he cautious in his endeavours to discover whether his suspicions were grounded

grounded in truth, lest he should communicate similar doubts to others.

He threw himself as much as possible in the way of Sir William, who preserved towards him the manners he had held when they were together in Devonshire; it being Sir William's unalterable resolution, even in the vengeance that he meditated against Ellen, that the world should never know that he had entertained a suspicion of her virtue or her love.

Sir William would often speak of Ellen, would mention the partiality she entertained for a country life, the new-born attachment to her boy, which seemed to swallow up every other affection, and sometimes he would lament that it deprived himself, and the rest of her friends, of her company in town.

Henry upon those occasions was strongly tempted to ask, what could detain him there, while Ellen was in the country; but as he could not forget, neither could he hope, that Sir William could forget the connexion that had once been between Ellen and himself.

The

The remembrance of this connexion imposed a scrupulous delicacy upon him whenever he mentioned Ellen to Sir William. As it was a subject he never began, so it was one that he always put an end to as soon as possible. Sir William perceived this shyness, and imputed it to the worst of motives; from a restless desire to discover what he dreaded to ascertain, he scarcely ever saw Henry, without introducing, in some way or other, the subject of Ellen's retirement, and Henry at length began to think there was something of affectation, or design, in this.

While Henry's mind was in this state of suspense, Lady Almeria awakened him to a much more lively suspicion of the truth.

Lady Almeria's own attendant was cousin to the woman who waited upon Ellen, they were both Northumberland girls, and Ellen's servant had spent all her life, till taken into Ellen's service, within a bow-shot of Groby Manor. Hence she could tell of the early love between her lady and Mr. Villars, of the cruelties of Lord Villars, the distress
of

of the lovers, the sudden appearance of Henry on the eve of Ellen's marriage, with every circumstance relating to the affair that was made public, and with many that had never happened, and which were reported from misapprehension and conjecture.

It was from her knowledge of much that really had passed, and from her belief in still more that never passed, that she had drawn the conclusion, that Ellen would never love Sir William. Thus, from the day of her marriage she never saw a shade of discontent upon Ellen's brow that she did not impute (according to the chamber-maid-like idea of the invincibility of a first passion) to her having been crossed in love.

With a mind thus pre-occupied by this fancy, it was not possible that the whole of Sir William's unkindness, and its effects upon Ellen, should be entirely concealed from her. What she fell short of in real knowledge, she made up in conjecture, and all she conjectured she reported as fact—

Much

Much of it indeed was so, though she did not know it.

Ellen having left some books in town, locked up in a cabinet, of which she had the key with her in the country, about this time sent her maid to town to bring them to her.

Jenny, who had her mind full of all that she believed had happened in Sir William's family since she last saw her cousin, made use of some of the few hours that she spent in town in a visit to Lady Almeria's house, and there she fully detailed, to her sister gossip, all she knew, and all she believed she knew. She told of Ellen's violent illness, immediately following an angry conversation with Sir William: she repeated some words she had accidentally overheard—she dwelt on the length of time which he had absented himself from the apartment of Ellen—on the dislike that he seemed to have to the child—on the grief that she had often witnessed in Ellen's countenance and manner—on the unkindness of Sir William,
in

in having never once visited Oakley since Ellen had retired thither—and on the contentment and ease Ellen seemed to experience notwithstanding his absence.

From all these circumstances those two Machiavels concluded, with a certainty that left no room for doubt, that Sir William was jealous of Mr. Villars, that he had banished Ellen into the country to prevent their meeting, and that Ellen had more satisfaction alone, and left to the remembrance of her first love, than, from the unkindness and suspicion of Sir William, she had ever enjoyed in the world, and in his society.

As Jenny sincerely loved her mistress, all Ellen did was right in her eyes; and if she had been employed by her in carrying on an intercourse with Henry, she would easily have excused her on the score of the unconquerable nature of a first passion, and the provocation received from a jealous husband; such circumstances forming a species of apology, that in vulgar minds is a sufficient excuse for every enormity.

But

But as Jenny thought Ellen extremely injured, so she knew her to be perfectly innocent; and hence she painted her as the most patient sufferer, and Sir William as the worst and most unkind of human creatures.

Lady Almeria's woman had often heard her lady express somewhat of contempt, and a good deal of surprise, on Ellen's withdrawing from town at that season of the year, and she had heard her throw out, as no improbable supposition, that it was contrary to her own wish, and the effect of Sir William's arbitrary jealousy; she had, however, also heard her declare that she was not in the secret, and did not in fact really know what the cause was.

Lady Almeria amongst her other foibles, had that most pernicious one of busying herself much in the affairs of others; she had always taken upon her to foretell that the marriage of Ellen with Sir William would end ill, and she looked with some degree of eagerness for every circumstance that could tend to prove that her predictions were fulfilled.

From these defects in Lady Almeria's character, Betty always found herself well listened to when she talked of the characters of her Lady's acquaintance, or repeated anecdotes of their respective families.

All therefore that she had heard from her cousin was most eagerly poured out as a torrent the next time she attended upon Lady Almeria, and it was poured out with all those exaggerations and embellishments that so readily occur to every relator of every story, who wishes to make the most of what is to be told. Every thing that Betty related found ready credence with Lady Almeria, and in a few hours after she had heard the story meeting with Henry :

"Now," said she, "I can clear up the wonderment of Lady Ackland's running away from us in such a strange manner ; that brute, Sir William, is jealous of you, and he means to confine Ellen to Oakley as long as she lives ; and woe be to you both, if you approach the threshold !"

Henry turned pale as death.

Let

“ Let me beg, Lady Almeria,” said he, “ that you will not indulge yourself in such wild fancies,—much less repeat them.”

“ Oh! you don’t believe me?—Come this way, then, and I will give you such a proof as will clear my veracity in a moment.”

“ Why should I be convinced of what would give me inexpressible pain to believe?”

“ It cannot give you more pain than it does me: I have been in a perfect fidget ever since I heard it—I am sure I dare not tell Mr. Mordaunt half, he’d be for cutting Sir William’s throat, or some such thing, for you never heard of such a dragon.”

Henry’s curiosity now got the better of his prudence, and he listened to all Lady Almeria had to tell;—but with what emotions he listened to it, it is not possible to express. His whole frame trembled, and his agitation was so great, that Lady Almeria began to repent that she had chosen a public assembly for such a communication.

“ Come, I will tell you no more,” said she, “ How you do love this Ellen still!—

I do not believe there is such another constant swain in the bills of mortality."

"I must know all now," said Henry, "cost me what it will, you have set me on the rack."

"But I dare not :—It will be you that will be for cutting Sir William's throat at this rate."

"No, I have no such thoughts; Sir William will live safe from my vengeance, But what is there more to hear?"

"Bless me, not much : It is easy to suppose what a jealous, an unreasonable man will say and do—But Ellen is so reserved that I don't find she has ever complained, even to her maid "

"Complained!—To her maid!—" repeated Henry, "No, Ellen knows how to suffer, but not to complain."

"And so she will have no redress! I see no mighty wisdom in that. Were I in her place I would complain, and loudly too—Men may be managed by their fears, and Sir William would not dare to use her so,
if

if he thought she would expose his conduct to the world."

Henry was in no humour to discuss the propriety of such maxims, and finding he could draw no farther particulars from Lady Almeria, he earnestly recommended what yet he could not hope she would practise, the strictest silence, and withdrew with a heart oppressed almost beyond sufferance.

Although Mr. Villars was well aware of the suspicious quarter from which he had received his intelligence; and though in any matter where the happiness of Ellen had not been concerned, such evidence as that on which it rested, would not have fixed any circumstance for a moment in his thoughts, yet in a case where so much was at stake, his apprehensions gave credibility to the most doubtful testimony; and this testimony seemed to be confirmed by several particulars, of the truth of which he could not entertain a doubt.

He knew the sudden and dangerous illness of Ellen, which was now ascribed to

Sir William's violence, to be a fact; and he had before been told, that it had been occasioned by a fright. It was also certain, that she had retired into the country, and that Sir William so far from accompanying her, had never even visited her since her residence there. The frequent, and what now more than ever appeared to be officious conversations, with him upon this subject, returned with added effect upon his mind, and he felt persuaded that they had been held with a design to confirm or do away suspicions which he was now convinced Sir William had entertained.

These suspicions seemed, it is true, ill to agree with the friendly and open conduct he had held towards him while in Devonshire; or with the continuation of the same in their intercourse in town: But Henry could not help fearing, that this conduct, which might be used as a cloak to his real thoughts, was rather a proof that the evil lay deep, than that it did not exist.

A thou-

A thousand schemes did he revolve in his mind as to what he could or ought to do towards the discovery of the truth ; and towards the alleviation of the evil if it did subsist : But to every one he found insupportable objections, and was obliged to rest in the conclusion, however contrary to his wishes he might find it, that the safest and best course he could pursue, was to do nothing.

Impelled however by feelings very similar, Sir William and he met continually : Their minds were equally occupied by the same subject, and though both were shy in their manner of treating it, they found no interest in any other.

Henry observed that Sir William inquired frequently into his motions ; and remarked, that he was particularly inquisitive whether his love for hunting did not carry him often to the Lodge. Henry was sometimes, upon such occasions betrayed, by his eagerness to do away all suspicion in Sir William's mind, into a minuteness of detail and

a warmth of denial, that rather seemed as the cover to the truth, than the simple declaration of it.

Seldom therefore did Sir William and Henry converse together without Henry being more than ever convinced of the jealousy Sir William had conceived, and Sir William confirmed in the justice of it.

By these conversations, and the reflections Sir William made upon them, his mind was at length wrought up to such a pitch of misery and indignation, that he resolved to withhold the meditated revenge no longer, but preparatory to the blow he intended to strike, it was necessary to see Ellen, and lull her if possible into perfect security.

For this purpose he no longer delayed to visit Oakley; there, however, such a scene awaited him, as again broke in upon all his designs, and suspended his mind once more in the agitating balance of uncertainty.

 CHAP. XII.

“What angel shall

“Bless this unworthy husband? He cannot thrive!”

SHAKESPEARE.

SIR WILLIAM found Ellen blooming with health, and her ingenuous countenance marked with the placid look of content, which virtue only can impress: He found her busied in every rural and every domestic care, living with her children perpetually in her arms, occupied wholly with them, and apparently without a thought which wandered from the environs of Oakley.

He was received by her with such marks of genuine satisfaction, as seemed not to

leave a doubt but that he was truly welcome to her, and that it would be his own fault if he did not derive from her society every happiness he could desire.

Such appearances were so entirely incompatible with the guilt he had been so ready to impute to her, as to compel him for some time, in spite of himself, to do her justice. Yet, if she did not love Henry, how came she to be so happy in the absence of her husband? The answer that his conscience forced from him to this question, gave him a pang of self-reproach, that he knew not how to endure.

If her heart be not another's—yet I have lost it for ever, thought he. But no, it is in loving Henry that she has ceased to love me. My conduct towards her has justified this dereliction in her eyes, and hence the ease and satisfaction that appears in her countenance; hence the deep hypocrisy she is enabled to maintain.

Such thoughts as these were supplanted by others more worthy of Ellen; and these were

were again driven from his mind by fresh suspicions and new jealousies. What would he not have given for Morgana's cup, or the little boy's mantle.

Ellen remarked the perturbation of his mind, and she strove to allay it by the most affectionate cheerfulness. It would not have been possible to have supposed from any word or look that escaped Ellen, that she had withdrawn into the country to avoid the violent effects of the most unjust jealousy; or that she retained an atom of resentment for the injuries she had received. A perfect oblivion as to all that had passed before her removal to Oakley, seemed to have pervaded her mind. She appeared willing to consider that period as a new epoch of her life, from which, if he pleased, Sir William might date their mutual happiness.

Sir William had now spent three weeks in Berkshire, and so far had the mild and wise demeanour of Ellen wrought upon his mind, that he began to consider all his past

fears but as the horrors of a frightful dream from which he was now awakened.

If he could always live with Ellen at Oakley, he thought he could subdue his jealousy; but to live always at Oakley, even with an angel, was what little suited his taste. It would not, however, he knew, be difficult to persuade Ellen to continue there altogether. This indeed appeared to be what she desired, and if he could be assured that she lived there wholly to herself and children, he was willing to flatter himself that the kindness with which he doubted not she would always receive him when he chose to join her, would be sufficient for his own happiness.

To this scheme of selfish felicity there was only one objection that arose in his mind; he feared there might be some mystery in the choice Ellen seemed to have made of Oakley for her residence, and the neighbourhood of the Lodge recurred to his remembrance, and brought with it a sudden pang of jealousy that made him start.

The

The experiment, however, he thought worth trying. If Ellen were innocent she might safely be trusted at Oakley, if she were guilty, the place of her abode was a matter of little consequence. Time and observation could alone clear this important point, and to time and observation he resolved to refer it.

Sir William was in this state of mind, not wholly cured of his suspicions, and yet willing to believe them ill-founded, when an event happened that seemed to his disturbed imagination to carry conviction with it; it fixed him immoveably in his plan of vengeance, and sealed the destiny of Ellen.

Both the children were seized at the same time with the measles, and the disorder put on its most alarming form. Ellen dispatched a messenger instantly to Lady Almeria, and shutting herself up in the apartment with the children, watched them with equal and unremitting solicitude. Before Lady Almeria arrived the little girl was apparently

out of danger, but the boy continued in a state of the greatest hazard.

Ellen, who had not a thought that she could spare from him, did not observe the almost undissembled indifference with which Sir William viewed the child's danger, and her sorrows; but it struck every body else. Lady Almeria considered it as a full confirmation of all that she had been told: She had promised to inform Henry of the progress of the child's disease, and she scrupled not to mention in the most explicit terms, all the observations that she had made on Sir William's conduct.

Henry was almost driven to distraction with the idea of Ellen's sufferings, and Sir William's cruelty, yet durst he not attempt to alleviate the one, or to punish the other; he could only entreat Lady Almeria not to remit the frequency and particularity of her details, and he awaited the event in town with all the anxiety and perturbation that he might have felt had he been indeed the father of the child.

Not

Not all the exertion of the best medical skill, not all poor Ellen's solicitous and unwearied care could prolong her darling's date on earth, or keep its spirit one moment from its native sky:—It died!—And Ellen remained a motionless image of despair, by the side of the bed on which it had expired.

Sir William had been out in his grounds, and returning, entered the apartment to make his usual cold inquiry, in his accustomed words of, "How go you on."

"It is all over!" said Lady Almeria.

"Thank God!" said Sir William, and rushed out of the room.

Ellen looked up, and instantly sunk down senseless, and to all appearance lifeless.

Lady Almeria's shrieks brought Sir William back. "You have murdered her—you have killed Ellen," said she.

No words can describe Sir William's consternation; he hardly knew the force of the words that had escaped him, and the effect they had upon Ellen appeared incomprehensible:

comprehensible! But the sight of her, pale and breathless before him, drove him almost to instant madness. He caught her in his arms, and eager to remove her from the chamber of death, carried her to her own apartment. There, while every method was used to restore her, he threw himself on his knees before her, and, regardless of all present, earnestly implored her forgiveness, upbraided himself as the most cruel and unjust of men, and promised never ceasing love and confidence if she would but live to bless him.

Ellen opened her eyes; but, as if the sight of Sir William was baneful to her, she put her hands before them and wept bitterly.

Sir William ordered every body to retire.

"No! no! no!" said Ellen.

"Do you then hate me?" said Sir William, "Dare you not trust yourself with me?"

These words brought Ellen to her recollection. "Do not talk so, Sir William; but I am very ill, I want assistance."

"I will

“ I will assist you. I would give my life for yours, and do you refuse to let me attend you ?”

“ Leave us,” said Ellen faintly. “ Oh! Sir William,” said she when they were alone, “ what mean those words of love after you have given me such a proof of your deadly hatred ?”

“ A proof of deadly hatred!—Oh! Ellen, how you wrong me, what sense can you have put upon my words to make you think them words of hatred ?”

“ The subject is too delicate,” continued Sir William, “ to explain upon; but is it an unpardonable crime, when hope was extinct, to have been grateful that suffering was no more ?” Ellen was silent.

“ Dearest Ellen, say you misunderstood, that you are convinced; do not persist in an error so injurious.”

“ I cannot speak, my heart is cruelly oppressed, but never need you dread injustice from me.”

“ Then

“ Then, my dearest love, look upon me; do not thus turn from me, as if the very sight of me was hateful to you. Often have I given you cause of offence, never did I find you unforgiving. Now, when I would not offend you, be not less kind.”

“ I would not think that there has been offence given; I would not think that there is room for forgiveness.”

“ Then in this embrace be all misapprehension forgotten: be assured, you cannot be grieved without my taking a part in your affliction.”

“ I will endeavour to believe it; but take it not unkindly if I wish to be alone, I am very greatly afflicted; I cannot now make use of the full powers of my mind; I cannot at this moment be all you wish me to be, or all I ought to be. Let me recollect myself, I hope soon to be resigned to all the ill I am destined to suffer, and alive to all the good that is still afforded me.”

“ May you consider my love,” said Sir William embracing her, “ as the greatest share

share of that good, and as a proof you do so, do not banish me long from you."

Sir William then left her, and endeavoured to calm the disturbance of his mind, by persuading himself that he had given such a sense to the unkind words that had escaped him, as would effectually remove from the mind of Ellen all apprehension of their real meaning.

Whatever were the suspicions that had dictated these words, and whatever the impulse to which he had yielded in uttering them, he was sensible there was a barbarity in their sound, that no motive, and scarcely any offence could justify. He doubted not but Lady Almeria would repeat them, and he saw his character at stake. In persuading Ellen that they were only the effusion of compassion, he knew he secured a warm advocate; and in the kindness of their intercourse he saw a refutation of any censure that his unguardedness might have exposed him to.

These were the selfish motives upon which his present conduct was founded, but he was

not

not without a very sensible compunction for what had passed, and had a very lively interest in the sorrows of Ellen. He had lately accustomed himself to consider her as rather injured than injuring, and in this light he felt for her a revival of his first passion, and mixed as it was with pity towards her, and reproach to himself, the expressions of it were more lively and tender than even in the first days of their marriage.

But Ellen's heart was no longer in a state to receive pleasure from the love of Sir William. No explanation that he could give to words so cruel and wounding, could do away the effect they had produced in her mind. Without fully understanding the feeling from whence they sprung, she felt them as the greatest and most unprovoked unkindness he could have been guilty of: the careless indifference he had shewn through the whole of the poor baby's illness, now rushed upon her recollection, and she found it impossible to believe that words so strong had arisen only from a sudden

den impulse of compassion to sufferings to which he had so long appeared insensible; yet why Sir William should rejoice in the death of his child, except because it was the source of her purest delight, she could not guess. She had often thought that he had considered the boy with jealousy, as an object that had occupied that place in her heart which he alone ought to have possessed; but for a jealousy so selfish and unjustifiable, with all her candour, she could find no excuse. A sentiment of disgust and resentment now therefore mingled with the deep grief of Ellen for the loss of her child; nor could all her efforts to subdue it wholly succeed. But grief in this case did more for her than reason; so overwhelming was her affliction, that it overcame every other feeling, and had the cause of the offence been unconnected with the subject of her sorrow, it would have been instantly obliterated from her mind.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

" Oft' expectation fails, and most oft' there

" Where most it promises."

SHAKESPEARE.

WHILE Ellen remained almost wholly absorbed in grief, a circumstance happened that broke in upon her affliction, and convinced her, that no state could be wholly wretched that afforded the benevolent heart an opportunity of administering to the wants of others.

Her letters from Northumberland informed her, that the grandson of her favorite protégée Deborah, a young man distinguished for his intelligence, honesty, and industry, had from some unavoidable misfortunes

misfortunes fallen into the greatest distress, and that he, his wife, and two children were in jail. Charlotte, who wrote the history, deplored the utter impossibility of her father to afford any effectual assistance to much undeserved misery, as the sum necessary for that purpose was not short of two hundred pounds, a sum much too large for him to spare from the immediate wants of his own family.

Ellen's heart seemed to leap in her bosom, when she read this account. Sir William had always continued his usual allowance to her, and the little occasion she had had for money for many months past, had made her rich. By anticipating a part of her next quarterage, which might be made easy by a little future economy, she was able immediately to command two hundred pounds, and by the return of the post she transmitted a draft upon Sir William's banker for that sum.

It is needless to attempt explaining the joy and gratitude of the family, whose miseries

series she relieved; their joy however was not short of her own, nor was her gratitude less when she raised her thoughts to the Giver of all Good—the giver of that good which includes all other, the giver of a good heart. This transaction shed a calm over the mind of Ellen, and contributed more to restoring her to peace than any gratification merely selfish could have done.

Lady Almeria had been but too faithful a detailer to the wretched Henry of the whole story of the death of the child, and the consequent sorrows of Ellen, and he felt on the communication his sufferings increase to so intolerable a degree, that he found it impossible to forbear some effort towards their alleviation. Yet when he considered that all his information came from Lady Almeria, and reflected upon her unfeeling character, and the talent she had in exaggeration, he thought it prudent to judge with his own eyes, and determine by his own observation before he took any step, the consequence of which might involve

volve the conduct of Ellen as well as his own.

Ellen, from the extent of her grief, which took in the whole of her mind, except what she could spare to the calls of benevolence, and from the gentleness of her temper, which forbade any sharpness of resentment, had been able to receive Sir William's attentions and solitudes with such a degree of satisfaction and gratitude as seemed to speak to all lookers on, that perfect harmony was restored between them. Ellen had been also particularly softened towards Sir William by his generosity, unlike his usual character, towards the grandson of poor Deborah. The circumstance of what Ellen had done for him came accidentally to his knowledge, and he was too acute not to perceive the favorable opportunity now in his power of doing more towards reinstating himself in Ellen's favor, than all his studied fondness to herself could ever have produced. He praised in the highest terms Ellen's benevolence, and by imitating, gave

an irrefragable proof that he approved it. To the two hundred pounds he added another, as a means by which the young man might be enabled to enter the world again with some advantage.

On this occasion Ellen looked upon Sir William with an air of the sweetest complacency, and she once more said to herself, his heart will at length open to a sense of the true use of riches, our minds and our wishes will be in unison, and we shall be happy.

Sir William had explained the offensive words to Lady Almeria, in the same sense that he had explained them to Ellen, and he sought more and more, by the marks of the fondest love, and most sincere participation in her present affliction, to prove that they could justly bear no other sense. Ellen seemed now to have forgiven, or at least to have forgotten all that had passed; and Lady Almeria now saw nothing between Ellen and Sir William that could justify her former opinion, or the tales of Jenny.

She

She was not however willing, notwithstanding those favorable appearances, to suppose herself mistaken, and while she acknowledged in her letters to Henry the change that had taken place, she scrupled not to impute it to the consummate art of Sir William, who meant by this means to deceive her. For the truth of this conjecture she appealed to the sorrow in which Ellen was still plunged, and which, she said, it was impossible to believe occasioned by the death of a brat not four months old.

But Henry, who saw no such impossibility, considering the peculiar circumstances in which Ellen was placed, and feeling his hopes revive that her sorrows did not wholly flow from so irremediable a cause as he had been taught to believe, thought this a proper time, when Sir William was with her, and they appeared to be on perfectly good terms with each other, to make use of his own observation to come at the truth if possible; for this purpose he came down to the Lodge, and the next morning after his ar-

rival walked over to Oakley. He had been told by Lady Almeria, that Ellen was so much indisposed that she seldom left her apartment 'till two o'clock in the day, and he had therefore chosen an hour for his first visit in which he believed he should only see Sir William.

He had crossed a corner of the park and had entered through a part of the gardens which led him directly to a small hall where servants always waited; but in going towards this hall he necessarily passed before the breakfast-room windows, which opened to the ground, and at which at that moment Lady Almeria was standing. They saw each other, and Lady Almeria beckoning to him, said, "So you are come? I thought you could not stay away, but you have good information, for I suppose you know Sir William is not at home?"—"Sir William not at home?" repeated Henry, "Why did you not tell me so before?"

"Oh, he went away two days ago, upon some sudden business or other that signified
not

not a farthing, and will stay away a week I believe: Well, sit down, and I'll run and tell Ellen; I am sure the sight of you will do her good."

"Stay, I beg you will stay," said he, "do you suppose, knowing all you do, that I would see Lady Ackland in the absence of Sir William?"

"Why not? I tell you it will do her good, and it was an hundred to one but you had found her in this room. She is much better than she was, and comes down to breakfast, but she had a head-ach this morning, and so kept her chamber."

"I am happy she did so: And now, Lady Almeria, if it be possible for you to keep a secret, promise me that you will not mention to Lady Ackland that I have been here; as some little indemnification for such restraint, I give you leave to tell Sir William every circumstance of my visit."

"Tell Sir William indeed! No, I will never tell him any thing that I think can give him satisfaction. But, in the name of

common sense (for as to high-flown heroics I do not pretend to understand them) pray tell me why you will not see Lady Ackland?"

"If half what you have told me is authentic, I think you may answer that question yourself; my visit was to Sir William, not to Lady Ackland, and when Sir William returns I will repeat it. I have no objection to seeing Lady Ackland, but I will not see her apart from her husband."

"But why not give yourself the merit of your mighty forbearance with Ellen?—Objection to seeing Lady Ackland indeed! I know you would give one of your eyes to see her with the other, why not tell her what hardships you impose upon yourself for her sake?"

"Dear Lady Almeria, would you have me shew to Lady Ackland that I know Sir William is jealous? I hope in God this is a truth she will always remain ignorant of. Have you not told me yourself, that even to you she will never appear to see this! and shall I convince her that not only you,
but

but that I am in possession of the fatal secret? A secret she wishes to conceal from all the world!"

"Why then do you not stay and see her, as you would do if you knew nothing of the matter?"

"And so expose her to the unjust suspicions and unkind treatment of Sir William. Even you supposed I had received intelligence of his absence, and do you think he will be less liable to fall into such an error? When Sir William knows of my visit, and knows I have not seen Lady Ackland, it will be impossible but that he should believe, what is truth, that I came to see him, and not her."

"Well, I pretend to no great skill, either in matters of prudence, or in matters of sentiment, but I'll engage for it I should manage a jealous husband better than either of you:—I should go my own way; if it were agreeable to my mighty Lord, so much the better for him; if the contrary, he would be soon weary of complaints that

hurt nobody but himself.—There, now you must see Ellen—that's her chamber door—I hear her foot on the stairs."

"Good morning then, and I entreat you do not say I have been here."

Henry darted out of the room, and to avoid the path that would have detained him for some time within sight of the windows, turned hastily into a more private one, which led into a part of the pleasure ground, that did not connect with that part of the park by which he had entered. After wandering about some little time, he found his way over a fence from which he regained the public road, and from thence his own house.

When here he reflected upon the escape he had had, and upon the injury he might have caused Ellen, had he seen her in Sir William's absence. Such a circumstance would, he well knew, have carried to a jealous mind, conviction of a private correspondence. He determined to learn forbearance for the future, and from henceforth to act

as if the sorrows and injuries of Ellen were indifferent to him. The evil that might have attended the gratification of his solicitude upon this subject, though he had guarded, as he thought, the mask of it with every possible caution, fixed the pang of self-reproach in his heart.

“Dearest Ellen,” said he to himself, “I am forbidden to contribute to your happiness; but let no alleviation to my own misery tempt me again to hazard an increase of yours.”

Alas! if the possibility of increasing the sorrows of Ellen appeared thus insupportable to the feeling and generous heart of Henry, what would have been his anguish had he been conscious of the evils he had already prepared for her. Determined by these thoughts, Henry measured his steps back to London, and firmly resolved, on no pretence whatever, again to attempt seeing either Sir William or Ellen.

Lady Almeria had a sharp contest between her love of communication, and her
I 5 pride,

pride, which was somewhat piqued by Henry's words, "If it be possible you can keep a secret." Her desire to shew him that she could, prevailed more than any motives of prudence or delicacy, or desire of obliging him, in inducing her to hold her tongue; but being fidgetty and restless under this restraint, she dragged Ellen with her into the garden, and then ran away from her to look all around for the purpose of seeing if Henry was quite gone.

Ellen was returning slowly alone to the house, when she saw, with some surprise, Sir William coming toward her; he was attended by a servant, whom she heard him questioning very earnestly, and with something of displeasure in his tone, whether there had been any visitors in his absence: On the man's strenuously answering in the negative, he turned angrily from him, and seeing Ellen, started with evident marks of discomposure. Ellen was not able to quicken her steps to meet Sir William, and so far from its appearing that Sir William

him hastened to meet her, that she thought for an instant that he would have turned another way. The next instant however he came forward, and joined her.

“You are much improved,” said he, in an unconciliating tone, “since I left you: I hear you come down to breakfast, and I see you walk in the garden.”

“Yes,” said Ellen, taking hold of his arm, “but that giddy Lady Almeria has ran away from me, and I should have found it difficult to have gained the house without some support.”

“You had support when you left the house, I suppose?”

“Lady Almeria was with me, but she has flown off upon some of her fluttering expeditions, I know not where, or why.”

“Have you been alone since I left you?”

“Yes, and poor Lady Almeria is so tired, I think she would have left me to myself, if you had not returned to put an end to our tête-à-tête.”

“She won’t like the party better for my being of it.”

“Indeed I believe nothing will detain her here much longer, she thinks she has already sacrificed enough to charity, for she declares she is here wholly upon that score now.”

Here they reached the house, and Ellen was glad to repose herself upon a sofa. Sir William stood silent before her, with his eyes fixed intently on her face, and lost in deep thought.

Struck with his appearance and manners, so unlike all that he had lately shewn, it occurred suddenly to Ellen, that something unpleasant had happened during his absence. “What’s the matter?” said she kindly, “you are returned sooner than you intended, nothing I hope is amiss.”

“It is plain I have returned sooner than I was expected, said Sir William, and went hastily out of the room.

Ellen astonished and alarmed, knew not what to think or conjecture; she was sure
some

some new jealous fancy had taken possession of him, but could not guess from whence it originated. Had she known that he had seen Henry scrambling over the fence that divided the pleasure ground from the road, the enigma would have been explained. This indeed was the case; hence his earnest questions to the servants, hence his increased suspicions on meeting Ellen in the garden, and hence that implacable desire of vengeance that proved so fatal to Ellen.

CHAP. XIV.

"If she be false, oh, then heav'n mocks itself."

SHAKESPEARE.

LADY ALMERIA returning to the house, learnt from Ellen the unexpected return of Sir William, and she learnt it with much satisfaction; for being heartily tired with her residence at Oakley, she was resolved to seize the moment when Ellen had a companion to leave it; she therefore replied, "Well, then, you'll want me no longer, and therefore I will return to town to-morrow, where I flatter myself many people want me."

"You will leave me," said Ellen, with a deep sigh, "you will leave me your little girl?"

"Most

“Most willingly, but I hope you won’t think of staying here, you’ll never recover your spirits if you do; but if Almeria grows inconvenient to you, either send her to me in town, or let her maid take her down into Devonshire. Lady Almeria, then went to give some directions to her servants for her removal the next day; and Ellen, dispirited and occupied wholly with conjectures as to the cause of Sir William’s discomposure, retired to her own room. Lady Almeria returned sometime afterwards to the breakfast parlour, and it occurring to her that it would be a good thing to apprize Henry of the arrival of Sir William, she wrote him the following lines.

“Sir William returned this morning, you made your escape in the nick of time, the enemy would have been upon you in a moment; now, however, you may make your approaches in all due form, and with a decorum that will set suspicion at defiance. I shall be gone to-morrow, so to all your other motives, you may add that of charity,
for

for your visits here : Perhaps the world will be kind enough to impute them wholly to that laudable principle. However, pray come, for poor Ellen will be moped to death if left wholly to the conversation of *caro sposo*."

This note she left open upon the table, while she ran up stairs to countermand some directions she had given to her maid ; she was not absent ten minutes, but Sir William entering the room in her absence, his eye was involuntarily caught by his own name, written in Lady Almeria's hand ; no motive of honor, or delicacy, could at that moment have restrained him from the gratification of his curiosity :—He read—every word was a dagger to his heart—He rushed out of the room into the garden, with the fury of a madman, impelled by a sudden impulse to seek Henry, and make him atone by his blood for the injury he could no longer doubt he had received from him.

A few moments however brought him to calmer reflection : His resolution was previously

viouſly taken, and taken upon what he thought a certainty little ſhort of that which he had this moment received. But ſuch evidence as this brought conviction with it, and he felt ſomewhat like ſatisfaction, that acting upon ſure grounds, that would now be juſtice which might before have been cruelty. His victim, if a victim he made, he had always determined ſhould be Ellen; her criminality was, in his eyes, of a much deeper dye than Henry's; it was the complicated product of hypocrify, infidelity, and treachery; he conſidered each action of her life ſince he became her huſband as marked with the moſt vicious duplicity, and he held himſelf acquitted to his own heart, for uſing the ſame means for the puniſhment of vice, which he believed had been purſued in the perpetration of it.

The preſent tumult of his mind, however, was too great to eſcape notice, if he were to ſubject himſelf to obſervation: He returned therefore to the houſe, and ſummon-
ing

ing his servant, complained of sudden indisposition, and went to bed.

Ellen was soon informed that Sir William was not well, and going to his chamber, saw his inflamed eye, and felt his burning hand; with a truly tender compassion, she entreated he would send instantly for a physician, and seating herself by his bed-side, declared her intention of watching by him 'till the physician arrived. Sir William opposed this resolution so strenuously, and with somewhat of such unkind warmth, that Ellen, fearing to be of more disservice by opposition, than of use by her attendance, at length yielded, and she yielded the more willingly, as Sir William positively asserted that his illness only arose from having rode fast in a hot sun, and he averred that a few hours sleep, (and he affected to feel himself drowsy) would entirely remove all his complaints.

Ellen was not, however, so well satisfied with Sir William's medical skill, as to rely wholly either upon his account of the cause
of

of his illness, or on his confidence in its cure ; she therefore sent for a physician, and frequently visited the door of Sir William's apartment, to satisfy herself, if she could, whether he slept or not. She was soon convinced that he did not sleep, being sure that she heard him up, and walking about his room ; she gently tried the lock of the door, but finding it fastened, did not venture to push her intrusion farther.

This circumstance fixed the most uneasy solicitude on her mind : The humour in which Sir William had appeared on his return home, and which, when he complained of illness, she had persuaded herself to attribute wholly to that cause, she now began to consider more as a cause itself ; and to fear, that if there really were any indisposition, it was brought on by discomposure of mind : But she apprehended that illness was indeed a pretence, and that Sir William meant by it to withdraw himself from all observation, without exciting any curiosity by doing so. In any case no good could

could be produced by her forcing herself upon him against his will. If he were really ill, she could not doubt but that he would do all that was necessary in such a case, and if any thing had arisen to vex him, she thought her influence to calm his mind would be exerted with the most hope of success, when he appeared more willing to listen to her. She therefore retired to her own room, and there waited in anxious suspense 'till Sir William's bell should give her a pretence again to appear in his apartment.

While these things were passing, Lady Almeria had returned to the breakfast-room, had sealed her note, and dispatched it to the Lodge, by the servant whom she was sending to the neighbouring town, for post horses for her carriage the next day. When she was told Sir William was ill, she was somewhat alarmed, lest she should be again involved in the cares of charity, and that his illness should be of such a nature as would not allow her, with decency to leave

Ellen

Ellen while it continued; she went to Lady Ackland's apartment, to make all the enquiries possible, but could learn nothing more that was satisfactory.

In the mean time the physician arrived, and Ellen desired he might be shewn immediately to Sir William; the servant however informed her that he had received the most positive commands from his master, not to enter his room until called for, and that he durst not disobey.

As Ellen's fears on the account of illness had very much subsided, she yielded to the servant's remonstrance, and affected to suppose that Sir William slept, and that sleep would be his certain cure. In her stolen visits to the door, she had observed all was quiet, and began to hope that the paroxysm of ill humour, which she was induced to think was the whole of the case, was going off.

About eight in the evening Sir William rang his bell: his servant found him up, and on being told that Doctor Wilson was in the house, he readily admitted both him
and

and Ellen. With a kind of bitter raillery he treated her wife-like fears, that had induced her to trouble Doctor Wilson to ride ten miles in a hot day, to visit a man who had gone to bed to sleep off a head-ach; and stretching out his hand to the physician, "Feel, Sir," said he, "if that pulse does not beat healthfully."

Doctor Wilson affirmed it did; and assured Ellen she need have no farther apprehension, for that Sir William had known how to cure himself.

Ellen, convinced that her suspicions as to the non-existence of any complaint, were perfectly well founded, now withdrew, and informed Lady Almeria that Sir William had slept off all his complaints, and that Doctor Wilson said he was quite well.

"Thank God!" said Lady Almeria.

Ellen could not help smiling. "I am sure Sir William is much obliged to you for the interest you take in his health," said she.

"Pish!—no—that's not quite the thing; but you know I have fixed to go to town to-morrow,

to-morrow, and I could not have gone and left Sir William ill, and you so drooping."

Ellen shook her head, and moralized a little to herself on the good and ill that attended a disposition so thoroughly selfish.

Sir William appeared both at supper and at breakfast next morning, but it happened that he was never an instant with Lady Almeria apart from Ellen, and if he had been so, it is probable she would not have mentioned the visit Henry had made, both from the reason she had given of never willingly contributing to the satisfaction of Sir William, and the feeling no particular stimulus to relate that which had nothing out of the common way to recommend it, and which contained no mischief in it.

When she shook hands at parting with Ellen, "Pray endeavour to recover your spirits," said she, "but you ought to go somewhere; you'll never be yourself again if you stay here."

"I think," said Sir William, after Lady Almeria was gone, "I think for *once* Lady Almeria gives good advice; I have been thinking

thinking of the same thing: What say you to an expedition for some little time?"

"I will accompany you any where willingly," said Ellen, her heart beating with the hope that Groby Manor would be the place thought of.

"Your health, your spirits, require some change of scene," returned Sir William, "our new-born happiness (hurryingly, and with a clouded brow he spoke it) requires nurture: in a distant residence, in a foreign country, I hope we should be able to re-establish the one and secure the other: what say you to going abroad for a few months?"

The thought of Northumberland crossed Ellen's mind, and prevented that promptness of compliance with which she usually met any proposal from Sir William; she hesitatingly replied, "I can have no objection, provided I can visit Groby Manor before I go."

"Why visit Groby Manor? That would derange all my plans, I want to be gone immediately."

"You

“ You do not mean then to be absent very long, I suppose?”

“ Not very long; I should propose returning in something less than a twelve-month.”

“ A twelvemonth!” repeated Ellen, “ and do you not call that long?”

“ I think a less time will not answer any of the purposes for which we go; and as I do not wish to spend any time in London for the next year and half, I would not return to England till next June.”

“ If our absence is to be so long, you can have no objection to my visiting Groby Manor before we set out. It is now a year and a half since I saw any of its dear inhabitants.”

“ When,” said Sir William, peevishly, “ shall I propose any thing to which you will give a ready assent?”

“ You cannot wonder,” returned Ellen, mildly, “ that I do not willingly consent to add another twelvemonth to the separation which has already taken place between me

and some of those whom I best love, and who best love me; my father in particular I know longs to see me."

"I should have no objection to your going into Northumberland, but the thing is impossible. Let me see—this is Wednesday, by Monday se'nnight I hope to be landed in Holland."

"By Monday se'nnight! Indeed I am very sorry to hear it; for, pardon me if I say, I fear my father will take it very unkindly if I leave England for so long a time without seeing him."

"You may easily exonerate yourself from the charge of unkindness; lay every thing upon the cruelty and tyranny of your husband, and then you will not only be excused, but pitied."

"Alas! if we carry such thoughts as these abroad with us, change of place will add little to our happiness."

"Why then do you give reason for them? In no one instance since we were married have you been willing to sacrifice the feelings of others to my wishes."

"Indeed!

“Indeed! this then shall be an instance: I am ready to quit England with you if you choose it.”

“And do you say this from your heart?”

“From my heart, and with my heart. I had hoped your wishes would never have been in competition with the duties that I owe my father, but since it is so, your wishes shall have the place they ought to have.”

“How inexplicable, how impenetrable is the heart of a woman!” exclaimed Sir William.

“Indeed, my dear Sir William, you make the mystery you seem to wonder at; surely there is not a leaf in the whole book of nature sooner read than that of my heart.”

“Do not I know, do not I know——” then hastily checking himself, “well, I will put you to the test.” Then opening a book of maps, “Let us trace our intended route; we will have none of the beaten road of France and Italy, let us begin with the north of Europe: my sister’s marriage with a Saxon nobleman has occasioned me at

times to reside so much in the northern part of Germany, that I feel myself at home there, and some of the happiest hours I ever knew were spent at Dresden—We will go to Dresden, I will introduce you to my sister—We will go first to the Hague, from thence we may see every thing that the United Provinces have worthy of observation; I will shew you Hanover, Brunswick, Hamburg; you shall visit the shores of the Baltic, we will then turn to Berlin, there we may spend some time, but we will winter at Dresden.”

“And by what route shall we come home?” asked Ellen.

“Oh, I will travel you through Bohemia to Vienna, perhaps enter Italy; but there are scenes with which I think you would be particularly pleased, in the Archbishoprick of Salzburg.”

“I think I should like to go from Vienna to Venice,” said Ellen, “from thence thro’ the Tyrol to Switzerland; I should be sorry to leave Switzerland out of our tour; but

we

we seem to be furnishing materials for a very long absence."

"We could easily pass through a much greater extent of country, than we have marked out, in much less time than we think of being absent."

"Yes, pass through it, but that is not the manner in which we should like to see it."

"This is only a rough sketch of what we may do; we must model it as circumstances and inclinations may arise."

"But do you really design to leave England next week? Is it possible we should do so? Must we not have a travelling carriage built? And your own affairs—can you put them into a proper state in so short an interval, to be left for so long a period?"

"All this may be managed, give yourself no trouble about the matter; make what arrangements you may find necessary as speedily as possible, and be assured I shall be ready to accompany you to town in less than a week in our way to Harwich."

Sir William then left her, and with an

air as if he would immediately begin his preparations; and Ellen retired to her room with a mind extremely distressed and embarrassed by the consideration of all that had passed since the preceding morning. She could not help connecting this sudden journey with the discontent and disturbance Sir William had manifested the day before; but all her reasoning and all her penetration were unequal to the discovery of the link that was between them.

From the habit, which had arisen from principle, that Ellen had acquired, of always looking on the bright side of events, and of opening her mind to all the good it was possible they could produce, she was enabled at this moment to subdue a crowd of painful apprehensions, and indistinct fears, that arose in her thoughts; and she endeavoured to gather from some words that had fallen from Sir William, that his present conduct was designed as the final test of her integrity and affection, and she flattered herself that a prudent management

ment on her part would fix the content of her future life upon a tolerably firm basis.

It was this thought that had made her so readily yield her consent, and reasonable desire of seeing her family before her departure, to the needless hurry, as it appeared to her, and capricious wishes of Sir William; and it was this thought that inspired her with fortitude to conceal the bitter regret that she felt in consequence of this sacrifice: She was resolved that Sir William should see, on her part, nothing but good humour and alacrity, and she hoped that in the cheerfulness with which she quitted every other attachment to accompany him, he would find a full refutation to those unjust suspicions that had hitherto destroyed her peace, together with his own.

CHAP. XV.

“No fune intorto crederò che stringa
 “Soma così, nè così leguo chiodo,
 “Comè la fè, che una bella alma cinga
 “Del suo tenace, indissolubil nodo.
 “Nè dagli antichi par, che si dipinga
 “La santa fè vestita in altro modo,
 “Chè d’ un Vel bianco, che la copra tutta,
 “Ch’ un sol punto, un Sol neo la puô far brutta.”

ARIOSTO.

THERE is no virtue which so immediately produces its own reward, as a vigorous exertion of the mind, arising from a purity of principle.

Ellen soon felt that cheerfulness and that alacrity which she had judged it proper to assume; she wrote without delay to her father, informing him of the journey she was about

about to undertake. But softening the apparent harshness of their declining to visit Northumberland before they sat out, by representing that Sir William's haste to be abroad arose from his solicitude on her account, which would not suffer him to listen to any delay: she intimated a very probable hope, that her absence would be much shorter than was at present talked of; she suggested that it would depend upon her perfect restoration to health, and as she could truly say that all remains of indisposition were even now trifling, she dwelt upon the almost certainty that they must meet again early in the spring. She endeavoured, by an appearance of cheerfulness and satisfaction, to leave no doubt upon the mind of her father, that the journey met fully with her concurrence, and she promised the most constant and minute details of all she should see or hear.

The letter, however kindly designed, or artfully framed, by no means answered the purpose for which it was written. Mr.

Mordaunt was struck by the glaring inconsistency of the degree of indisposition that required so precipitate a removal into another country, and the choice that had been made of the country to which the invalid was to be removed. The climate of the Northern part of Germany seemed ill calculated for the recovery of a constitution debilitated by sickness and sorrow.

Ellen had indeed mentioned, as a concurring motive for her journey, that from change of scene was hoped a relief to her spirits, as well as from change of climate to her health. But Mr. Mordaunt well knew, that if left to her own choice, Ellen would have sought every relief that she could hope for her mind in Northumberland, rather than elsewhere; and the cheerfulness which she had assumed in her manner of writing, with the pleasure she affected to take in the prospects before her, seemed to say that she did not stand in need of much assistance in this way.

These

These reflections perplexed and disturbed Mr. Mordaunt, and he resolved to see Ellen before her departure; he wrote accordingly to inform her of his intention, but that he might not delay for a moment a journey upon which Ellen had described Sir William as so earnestly bent, he told her that he should immediately proceed to town, where he hoped he should be time enough to catch them for a few hours as they passed through it; he having understood from Ellen that Sir William did not mean to make even a day's stay in the metropolis. But Sir William's haste defeated Mr. Mordaunt's kind purpose, and though, had he known the fears and suspicions that had found their way into Mr. Mordaunt's mind, he would willingly have spared not one day only, but several days, for the purpose of removing them, yet it not having occurred to him that Mr. Mordaunt would not rest satisfied with Ellen's representation of the matter, he was not aware that there were either fears or suspicions to remove.

On the very day that Ellen's letter arrived at Groby Manor, she and Sir William left Oakley for London: Contrary to the first plan, they passed two nights and a day there, but pursuing their journey the day following with diligence, they had sailed from Harwich before Mr. Mordaunt reached town.

The circumstance that had detained Ellen a whole day in town was the sudden marriage of her own maid. Jenny had been courted by a young man, son to one of Sir William's principal tenants; it had been agreed that the match was not to take place until the young man could take a farm of his own, and this they had considered as somewhat a distant prospect: But the day after Sir William had determined upon the plan of going abroad, his steward had offered a farm to Thomas upon such advantageous terms, that nothing was wanting but the consent of Jenny to become his wife, to make him one of the most contented of men. Jenny objected to the impossibility

possibility of leaving her Lady so suddenly, and so much to her inconvenience; but her scruples were soon overcome by the rhetoric of Thomas, and she mentioned, though with some reluctance, to Ellen, how unlucky it was that she was obliged just then to go into foreign parts, when if she had staid at home she might have been married to Thomas.

Ellen easily understood her, and as no personal inconvenience ever caused her to hesitate when the happiness of others depended upon her decision, she cheered Jenny with a ready and kind consent to her remaining in England, and by assuring her that she did not apprehend any unpleasantness to herself in consequence of her doing so.

Sir William seemed highly pleased with Ellen's disinterestedness on this occasion, and gratified both the mistress and the maid, by making Jenny a very handsome nuptial present.

Ellen

Ellen received this act of Sir William as a farther proof, that his manner of thinking was becoming more congenial to her own. Of servants he generally spoke of creatures of a lower order of beings, and who were bound, if well paid, to consider themselves, without murmuring, as the slaves of caprice, and the victims of tyranny. She had feared he would have inveighed at the ingratitude and unfeelingness of Jenny, and she had prepared several mollifying arguments to make him submit quietly to the inconvenience her sudden desertion must occasion; she was much delighted to find him in so different a disposition, and readily acceded to his request, that as she had now no English servant, to whose services she had been accustomed, she would supply Jenny's place with a foreign one, which he assured her she would find much more convenient during her sojourn abroad.

Ellen had written to Lady Almeria to desire she would find her some person who
could

could supply the present emergency, and the choice she had been obliged to make between several candidates had detained her in town. Having fixed upon the least exceptionable, she had dismissed Jenny, and with her new attendant had proceeded on her journey.

Nothing could exceed Mr. Mordaunt's disappointment, when, on his arrival in town, he found Ellen had left it; but he had such comfortable assurances, both from Lady Almeria and his son, of the state of her health, and the ease and apparent contentment of her mind, that he became perfectly satisfied in every respect but that of having missed the pleasure of seeing her. He imputed the unnecessary hurry which had accompanied their departure wholly to the solicitude of Sir William, to re-establish the health of Ellen, a little aided by the pleasure that it was reasonable to suppose he would feel in returning to the scenes and habits of foreign courts, as it was very apparent that those of his native country,

country, were not nearly so pleasing to him.

Mr. Mordaunt returned to Northumberland, well enabled, by the satisfaction his own mind had received, to tranquillize the anxious apprehensions of Ellen's friends and well wishers, who were, indeed, numerous as her acquaintance, with only the exception, perhaps, of her own mother.

Mrs. Mordaunt, however, had long ceased to feel that rancour of dislike which for many years had occasioned so much misery to Ellen : Her marriage had removed her from the situation where her superior qualities had given Mrs. Mordaunt perpetual umbrage ; and the power that this marriage had given Ellen of gratifying many of her mother's wishes, had in some degree conciliated her affections—affections that never yielded but to the voice of selfishness. Ellen had taken care to supply her constantly with some new fashionable article of dress, or furniture ; she had written her every fashionable anecdote she could collect,

lect, and had furnished her with every new play, or political pamphlet, which made the conversation of the day; and which, from being early communicated to Mrs. Mordaunt, enabled her to support that superiority over her country neighbours, in which all the desires of her still existing vanity seemed now to center: Mortification had humbled her, and, though it had not corrected the faults of her temper, it had made her more careful to conceal them. The constant sight of her eldest and favourite daughter, who, with her two children drew their scanty support, and to the inconvenience of the family, wholly from Mr. Mordaunt, was such an undeniable proof of the fatal consequences of her misjudging pride and vanity, as compelled her to appear to adjure the principle that had led to such fatal mistakes: she no longer dared to express a desire to rule in a family, every individual of which suffered in one way or other from her once unbounded sway. A never intermitting discontent preyed

preyed upon her heart, and undermined her constitution. The marriage of her son with Lady Almeria, from which she had hoped to have derived so much satisfaction and consequence, yielded her neither one nor the other.

Lady Almeria shewed her the most pointed disrespect, never condescended to visit her, or invited her daughter to partake with her in the amusements of her country house, or the gaieties of a London life. The unwise and unjustifiable partiality she had manifested towards her son, he repaid, rather as if he considered the effect than the motive: No consideration for her maternal tenderness softened with him the censure which her character so well justified, and he by turns ridiculed and disregarded her.

From Mr. Mordaunt, however, she continued to receive every mark of consideration and kindness, and as her increasing ill health softened his heart towards her more and more, all past offences were by degrees forgotten by him, and something
like

like his first love began to revive in his heart.

From the contemplation of a character so selfish as Mrs. Mordaunt's it is relief to turn the mind to that of Henry's.

Stunned as he was at the first intelligence of Ellen's journey to the continent, and by the certainty that she was thus removed from his sight and observation, yet when he learnt from Lady Almeria her improved health, and apparently recovered ease of mind, he found ample compensation for every selfish pang, in the hope that she was now about to reap the reward of a virtue and strength of mind, which had proved itself superior to all the buffetings and crosses of fortune. In the progress, and event, as he hoped it would prove, of her trials, he acknowledged the force of that principle of the mind, which makes the inviolable preservation of a once vowed duty the rule for conduct, and the standard of happiness.

Ellen

Ellen will pursue, thought he, her path of rectitude in foreign climes, far, far distant, it is true, from me, but if I am enabled to tread the line marked out for me, with an equally steady foot, then, in spite of present distance, and probably future separation, we shall meet at last—meet where no decorum, no unjust suspicions, no unworthy fear will restrain the pleasures of our intercourse; we shall meet where we shall be allowably dear to each other thro' a long and happy eternity.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

“Happy the man who sees a God employ’d

“In all the good and ill that chequer life.”

—COWPER.

WHILE with these kind thoughts and flattering hopes the English friends of Ellen endeavoured to console themselves for her absence, she was pursuing her route abroad with much less satisfaction than she had promised herself.

The haste with which she had quitted England, had occasioned that every hour from the moment when the scheme was first suggested to that in which it had taken place, had been wholly occupied with preparations for the journey, and she had little leisure or opportunity to attend to the occupations of Sir William, who was equally engaged

engaged with herself. In the little communication she had with him on any subject apart from the one that so mutually employed their thoughts, she had reason to believe him satisfied with her, and though his satisfaction was not accompanied by the gaiety that it used to be, before any unkindness had arisen between them, yet it appeared of that genuine kind which promised continuance and increase.

Ellen, however soon began to fear that her willingness to believe the best had deceived her.

A profound gravity, almost a gloom, seemed to have pervaded the mind of Sir William; he treated her with an austere coldness, totally different from any thing she had hitherto seen in him; and as the burst of passion and sallies of ill humour she had before been exposed to, had appeared the result of sudden and irresistible suspicion, and had therefore subsided as the suspicion vanished; the arbitrary severity that he now assumed towards her, seemed as if it could only be justified by a conviction
of

of her depravity. It was the lordly tone of a despotic husband, that he now took upon him, and he extended his privileges to the regulating the most trifling articles of her economy: her own servant appeared to be particularly the object of his caprice, repeatedly Ellen was obliged to change her attendant, and every succeeding one seemed but the more the object of Sir William's dislike.

Ellen's correspondence with her English friends was more than every thing else a cause of offence to Sir William; he reproached her continually, that though in person she had accompanied him abroad, her thoughts, her wishes, and her affections were in England; he seemed to regard every packet she received with suspicion, and sometimes scrupled not to hint that they should never be happy together until she broke off all intercourse with every one but himself.

Ellen turned a deaf ear to all such insinuations; nothing she was resolved should induce her to make such a sacrifice of her duty, nor any thing but force compel her

to

to it. "All the affections in a good heart," would she sometimes say, "are so closely entwined, that the one cannot be destroyed without the destruction of the others. If I did not love my parents, my sisters, and my friends, I could not love you."

Sir William understood nothing of this, and as he had given up the hope of being beloved by Ellen, his present unkindness was rather the result of ill humour, than the effect of jealousy. Of the guilt of Ellen he had no doubt; the readiness with which she had concurred in his scheme for leaving England, the cheerfulness and good humour which had accompanied this concurrence, he considered but as parts of that mass of intended hypocrisy that he believed had pervaded her whole conduct, from the first hour of their marriage—an hypocrisy that swelled her guilt in his apprehension beyond all bounds, and excited in his breast a proportionate resentment: he had been willing to appear duped by it while it could any ways further his own purposes, but he was determined to punish it by every act of unkindness

unkindness and provocation that an irritated and revengeful mind could suggest.

In a more generous and candid disposition than Sir William's, the conciliating and affectionate manners of Ellen, with the ingenuous frankness of her sentiments, must have produced different effects; they must have induced a doubt of the strongest appearances that indicated guilt in her, they must have led to explanation and acquittal; or at least they must have suspended condemnation, and withheld the arm of chastisement.

But Sir William's resolution was taken; nothing could now divert him from his purpose. It is true, had he been entirely master of himself, he would, until the moment of putting it into execution have concealed all desire of vengeance; but the ill passions rankling in his heart broke out, in spite of every effort to the contrary, into paroxysms of tyranny and ill humour, and poor Ellen was the victim of them all.

In these circumstances it is not to be wondered at, if Ellen placed her most fer-

vent wishes on a return to England, or that she found little real satisfaction from the varying objects that occurred; but still Ellen's disposition and principle of making the best of every thing did not forsake her. Her perfect good sense directed her to the best means for attaining this end; it taught her to keep her own passions under controul, it repressed the tyranny of imagination, it enabled her to balance the real good and evil of her situation, and it shewed her that in the scale of human miseries there were more above than below her. The circumstances of every day seemed however to change this proportion.

The pressure of Sir William's ill humour became so perpetual, that Ellen, with all her patience and ingenuity, could scarcely contrive to escape one moment its weight; she hardly knew how to extract one drop of comfort from any reflection that her present situation or future prospects afforded.

She had nearly lost all hope that any conduct of hers could meliorate the disposition of Sir William, and she was farther confirmed

confirmed in this hopelessness by considering that his present unkindness could not be the fruits of any suspicion arising from the events of the passing hour. She was separated from all who were dear to her—she was alone with Sir William in a world where there did not exist an individual who engaged her attention, or interested her affections, what then could he suspect? what then could he fear? It was not possible that the events of the present time should excite either fears or suspicions, this ill treatment therefore she could only impute to a deep resentment for former imagined offences, to estranged affections, and to natural temper, evils hopeless of cure.

Mild reasonings, cheerful tenderness, affectionate attention, and hitherto unwearied patience, she had tried in vain; she knew of no other remedies, and resigning hope, she endeavoured to arm herself with a double stock of fortitude, and thus strove to support with calmness and dignity the miseries of a destiny she knew not how to escape.

She could hope little from time, except as the dissolver of that union which as long as it lasted she was now convinced must be a source of unallayed affliction to her: but it was not in Ellen's nature, even in wish, to establish her happiness on the death of a fellow creature, nor in her chastened and religious mind, to desire to accelerate to herself so awful a period; she was desirous in this, as in every other particular, to refer herself wholly and without reserve to the disposal of a Being, on whose wisdom and goodness she had the most profound and unshaken reliance. She left events to his care, who in superintending an universe withdraws not his attention for an instant from the smallest atom of which it is composed; and bent her solicitude undivided to the right conduct of that part allotted to her, and on the performance of which depended a happiness, or misery, as unlimited in degree as duration.

Ellen judging it expedient to avoid, if possible, all *self commiseration*, allowed herself

self little leisure for reflecting upon her chagrins, she contrived to be almost wholly occupied by the variety of persons and things that their continual journeyings threw in her way, and as her general knowledge and the cultivation of her mind, fitted her to enjoy the best conversation, and supplied her with observations and reflections upon every subject of curiosity that occurred either in nature or art, however she might be deprived of happiness, she was by no means destitute of a very interesting amusement.

She never yielded to the supineness and languor which, from the hopelessness of her sorrow, would sometimes invade her mind; she considered it as a signal to rekindle her activity, and to double her efforts toward procuring occupation.

They moved from place to place, according to the will and caprice of Sir William, and having consumed some months in visiting several of the Northern Courts of Germany, on the shores of the Baltic, and in a short residence at Berlin, they

found themselves towards the end of December settled in a pleasant house on the banks of the Elbe.

Ellen was, on her first arrival at Dresden, introduced to Sir William's sister; she found her perfectly well bred, and highly accomplished, assiduous to render her all the little offices and attentions that politeness required, but apparently without a wish to cultivate any intimacy with her, beyond what common civility demanded. There seemed to be little attraction between their characters: Madam Teschen had been so long absent from her country, that England had no place in her affections—her sentiments and her inclinations were German, and the evident disregard and coldness with which Sir William treated Ellen, must unavoidably give her an unfavorable idea of her character, that it could not be expected in the kind of intercourse that took place between them, Ellen would be able to destroy.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

"Patience herself, what Goddesses e'er she be,
"Does lesser blench at sufferance than does she."

SHAKESPEARE.

ELLEN indeed soon found that neither with Madam Teschen or any one else was it Sir William's wish that she should associate, he seemed unwilling that she should be known, or that she should have it in her power to make herself friends.

After she had been introduced at court, and into all such houses as Sir William had been formerly acquainted with, and after she had seen all that the place afforded worthy of curiosity, Sir William made it appear very evidently, that he never was so

well pleased with her, as when she remained shut up in her own habitation.

This desire of Sir William's to seclude her from all society, agreed much better with her inclinations than her prudence. Sir William was seldom at home, and thus left to herself, and deprived of the means of indulging the active propensities of her mind, or the benevolent dispositions of her heart, she found no interest in the common occupation which her books or her works afforded, sufficiently powerful at all times to suspend the querulousness of regret, or the anticipation of fear.

It became absolutely necessary to find some employment, which from its novelty might engage her whole attention. In this dilemma the advantage that would accrue from learning the German tongue occurred to her; hitherto she had never continued long enough in any one place to attempt it, but she had now more than sufficient leisure: It had been represented to her as extremely difficult, but this was rather an inducement

to her to attempt to learn it at this time, than any discouragement. Whatever would call for the greatest exertion of her faculties, and demand the largest share of her attention, would answer her present purpose in seeking employment, the best; she therefore resolved to learn German, and she hoped in the labours of her understanding to forget the sorrows of her heart. She entered therefore upon her task with avidity, her master attended her every day, and the eagerness with which she bent her whole mind to the business, with her natural talents, soon convinced her that the difficulties of the language had been exaggerated; she was not however disappointed in the main end, the newness of the pursuit interested her, it filled her time, and it filled her thoughts, it prevented her thinking of herself;—employment (thought she) is the great secret of contentment.

She had been thus busied about ten days, when Sir William, whom she seldom saw in the course of the day for more than a

few minutes at a time, and who knew nothing of her new employment, unexpectedly entered her apartment.

He asked in English, angrily and eagerly, what she was about.

“I am learning German,” said Ellen with a smile.

“And do you not know languages enough?” returned he rudely, “what affectation is this of the love of study?”

Ellen doubted whether she heard him aright: Amongst all the foibles of Sir William’s character, he had always appeared wholly free from the mean jealousy which some men betray of female talents and female acquirements; on the contrary, she had often heard him declare, that in marrying he had sought not merely a mistress but a companion, and he had said, that his choice of her had been as much determined by the cultivation of her mind, as by the attractions of her person, or the sweetness of her temper.

It

It is true, these were the fondnesses of his early love, and might be, with respect to herself, no more than the flatteries of it, but she had invariably seen him seek the society of the best informed females, and he had always appeared to have a more than common pleasure in their conversation.

She knew not therefore what to impute his sudden displeasure to his discovery of her desire to add another language to those which she already understood.

“You are not serious,” said she, “that my attempt to learn German gives you offence?”

“Perfectly so, and I desire you will immediately dismiss that gentleman there, and inform him that you shall not again require his attendance.”

Ellen turning to the German, told him, in French, that she was at present particularly engaged, and that she would let him know when she again wished to see him.”

The man departed, and Ellen turning to Sir William said, “Pray what am I to understand from all this?”

“That it is my will that you do not learn German, and that any farther attempt to acquire the language will be, on your part, an act of disobedience.”

“You have so little used me to so authoritative a style, that you must forgive me if I say I am somewhat surprised with it.”

“I know the new philosophy of matrimony, as with every thing else, is equality; but I believe we were united upon the old terms of the wife’s obedience and subordination, and there ought to be nothing surprising if I exact from you no more than what you voluntarily engaged to perform.”

“I thought I understood,” returned Ellen, “that you preferred receiving your rights in the free-will offering of love, rather than in the tribute of duty; if I am mistaken, of two unhappy people you will be the most to be pitied—but you may be assured you shall most strictly receive your due.”

“If there ever were a time when I had such an option,” said Sir William with a sigh, “is it not gone for ever? Will you,
(added

(added he, after some little pause) will you order your maid to fold up those books?" pointing to the German grammar, &c. that lay upon the table, "and I will put my seal on them?"

"I will do it myself," said Ellen, and immediately wrapping up all the books and papers relating to the intended study, she bound them round with a string, lighted her taper, and presented the parcel, and a stick of sealing wax to Sir William.

While she was thus employed, Sir William regarded her with the most fixed and melancholy attention. Preserving an inviolable silence, he took the wax from her, melted it at the taper, dropped some drops on the string, and impressed it with his seal, then casting up his eyes, "Oh!" exclaimed he, with a deep sigh, "that there were a possibility of a doubt! that I might be again deceived!" and, so saying, he hurried out of the room.

"Miserable inconsistency!" said Ellen, sinking quite oppressed into a chair, "thus ardently

ardently to desire to be beloved, thus assiduously to destroy all ground for affection."

After this incident Sir William seemed as if more than ever to shun being alone with Ellen, he appeared as if afraid that she might resume her influence over his mind. Her present situation made her particularly interesting, she was again with child, and she could not help remarking with surprise, that notwithstanding Sir William's increasing indifference towards her, this circumstance seemed to give him much more satisfaction than he appeared to derive from it, when she believed herself in the full possession of his affections. To herself it conveyed little happiness.

The present depressed state of her mind and the remembrance of the bitter disappointment in which her former hopes from the same source had ended, deprived her of the power of looking forward to the birth of her child either as an alleviation to her own sorrows, or as the probable beginning of a state of happiness to another human being.

In

In this manner the winter passed away at Dresden—Sir William had been more than once absent from her for two or three nights at a time, either engaged in visits to such of his former friends as resided at some distance from Dresden, or in the pursuits of the sports of the field. For the latter purpose he declared his intention, in the early part of the spring, of establishing himself for some little time in a Saxon village, on the confines of Bohemia, it was a part of the country with which he was well acquainted, and which would afford him plenty of game; and from the liberty of sporting that he had received from many of his friends, it would be fully in his power to pursue it.

Ellen had no reluctance to accompany him; she rather hoped advantage from change of place, than dreaded any increase to her present chagrins; and Dresden had been too melancholy a sojourn to her for her not to find some relief in bidding it adieu.

 CHAP. XVIII.

“ Studisi ognun giovare altrui, ch’ è rade
 “ Volte il ben far, senza il suo premio fia.

ARIOSTO.

THEY were soon settled in a small house little better than a cottage, in a small Saxon village, situated in the mountain that separates Saxony from Bohemia. Here however, having previously provided themselves with every necessary at Dresden, they wanted none of the comforts and conveniencies of life to which they had been accustomed.

Ellen soon began to think her situation much improved ; the manners and appearance of the villagers became extremely interesting to her : In a little hamlet, scarcely
 ly

ly containing twenty houses, surrounded by extensive forests, and apparently shut up by rugged and almost inaccessible rocks, from all intercourse with civilized life, Ellen found a gaiety, a hospitality, a sociability of manners, that she had often in vain sought for in more polished societies. These were accompanied, it is true, by the hardest labour, but the virtuous exertions of individuals for the support of their respective families, seemed to be the source of no obstruction to the general hilarity.

Ellen also observed, with pleasure, that almost every body could read, and that this general diffusion of knowledge was far from being any obstacle to any of the cares of the most assiduous housewifery. Clean, active, and spirited, the women particularly charmed her by the beauty of their shapes, and the animation of their looks; and she more than ever regretted the want of a common language between them and herself.

In spite of this obstruction to their more intimate intercourse, Ellen spent much of her

her time in the cottages and in walks through the adjacent woods; she longed to clamber amongst the rocks, as she had been accustomed to do in happier days in dear Northumberland, but this her present circumstances forbade.

Sir William was so frequently absent, that he knew little how she passed her time, and had he known, it could have made no objection.

One of her favorite walks was round the back part of the village through a small wood, which led along the side of a rivulet, which coming suddenly to an abrupt and somewhat steep rock, overgrown by brushwood, threw itself down with a precipitancy that produced in miniature one of the most beautiful cascades imaginable. The path wound gently below this rock, and the rivulet, after its fall, resuming its calmness, flowed quietly along the valley.

Immediately at the foot of this rock was placed a cottage, which from its situation and the accompanying features of the surrounding

ing

ing scene, was picturesque beyond description, and Ellen had often stood contemplating it from above with a pleasure inexpressible, and often had she descended to rest herself on the bench at its door, and to receive the welcome refreshment of a bowl of milk, with which its hospitable inhabitants were always willing to supply her.

One morning she directed her steps to the favorite spot, and finding herself more than usually fatigued with her walk, thought with uncommon satisfaction of her resting-place the bench. What then was her grief and disappointment when arriving on the top of the rock, from whence first the cottage could be seen, she looked for it in vain? The cottage was no more, but from its site arose a curling smoke, which told with too much certainty its fate. Of self in such a moment no one would have thought. Ellen knew not that she existed, but ran with a precipitancy round the rock that left her no breath when she arrived at the bottom of it.

Here she found the ruined and desolated
family,

family, given up to all the horrors of despair. It consisted of a mother, two daughters, and three children, the offspring of one of the daughters, the husband of whom, a miner, being at present engaged at some distance from his home, and left the helpless females without that assistance which would probably have averted a calamity, which, with a lamentation useless as their own, he would now only be able to deplore.

On the sight of Ellen, all the poor sufferers gathered around her; the old woman grasped her hand, the children caught hold of her cloaths, the mother pointed to her ruined cottage, and then to her infants. The appeal was irresistible, there was no need of language—the note of supplication is the same in all—Ellen's heart was ever responsive to its cry; she returned the pressure of the old woman's hand, she embraced the children, she took out her purse, it contained not much, for the supplies of Sir William were no longer regular; but happily much was not wanted. The ruin, it is true, was compleat, but the means of recovery

covery were not very extended—Ellen gave all she had, it appeared a mine of wealth to the receivers, and their expressions of gratitude, were more than the feeling heart of Ellen could bear. The bench was gone, but she sat down on a stone, and the younger sister, who was the first to observe her emotion, ran hastily to the rivulet, and brought her a little water in a wooden bowl; Ellen drank it and was relieved, and rose to depart. Again the gratitude of the now happy family threw them at her feet.

At length escaped from these, to her, painful effusions of their feelings, Ellen turned her steps homewards with a lightened purse, but with a heart ten times more lightened. She had not known a sensation so delightful since the day in which she had relieved the distresses of the grandson of old Deborah.

Oh! said she to herself, how little do those know of happiness, who confine it to the gratification of self!

Ellen now grew so near the time of her confinement, that she began earnestly to wish that Sir William, would remove from
their

their present situation. It had been determined that she should lie-in at Vienna, and that from thence, after her recovery, they should prosecute their tour: a tour, which Ellen no longer wished to be extended. Her wishes were fixed on England, and she sometimes thought if she might be permitted to return thither, with a healthy baby in her arms, she might still secure to herself a tolerable portion of happiness.

Day after day passed away, and Sir William still found new reasons for continuing where they were, but at length their removal could be delayed no longer, if indeed Ellen was to arrive at Vienna before her lying-in.

Sir William had for some time past suspended the unceasing attention, which on their first leaving England he had shown to the personal attendants upon Ellen; her present servant had lived with her since her arrival at Dresden, and she had no reason to wish to change her. Two days, however, before the day on which it was now fixed they should leave the village, Sir William expressed the most pointed disapprobation
of

of her: told of his suspicions of her honesty, complained of her impertinence, and desired Ellen would dismiss her.

Ellen could not help a little remonstrating against a request, the compliance with which would expose her to all the fatigues and inconveniencies of a long journey in her present helpless circumstances, without the assistance she had been so long accustomed to, and she proposed that she might be allowed to retain her servant until her arrival at Vienna, when she said she would willingly discharge her. Sir William urged her immediate dismissal, and whatever were the inconveniences that Ellen might fear from it, she thought them less than those which attended a contest with Sir William; she therefore acquiesced, and Sir William promised to seek out some peasant's daughter, who might accompany them on their journey, and continue with Ellen until she could find somebody more to her mind at Vienna.

Fortunately his enquiries were answered by a young person who was just returned
from

from service at Dresden, and she willingly consented to attend upon Ellen as long as she wished her to do so. The caprice that Sir William manifested in these particulars, was not confined to the attendants upon Ellen, he had repeatedly parted with his own personal servant, and at this time their whole suite consisted of the newly hired Saxon girl, and one footman.

“We will establish ourselves comfortably at Vienna,” said Sir William, “already we have a good house taken there, and I have desired a female friend of mine to hire us servants. I will now add to the list a *femme de chambre* for you.”

“My dear Sir William,” said Ellen pressing his hand, “How happy should I be if you would realize your words. If *indeed* we might have a comfortable establishment *anywhere*. Long have we wanted it, and yet every comfort and every happiness seem to be in our power.”

“Be satisfied,” said Sir William, all will soon be as it ought to be.”

END OF THE VOLUME.



